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The Viceroy and other officials had found India's social conditions bad, and they had stressed on giving importance to 'social topics' in the Congress organization, and that was what Sir Hume had also desired at that time. W.C.Benerjee said that Sir Hume had in mind only 'of a social conference which he converted into a political organization at the prompting of the Viceroy.' But that was not so according to Anul Seal who said that: II

"Long before Sir Allan O.Hume saw Viceroy Dufferin, he had already declared to Malabari, who was trying to enlist his support for a programme of social reform, that a national organization would have to leave such matters strictly alone."

Whatever that may be, said Anil Seal, 'the Indian nationalism, in truth, was the child of the British Raj, and the British authorities blessed its cradle'. But the Indians of these days, who perhaps think that they descended straight from heaven, would not agree with all that and they malign the good intentions of those founders of the concept of freedom and liberty in India. One Indian pungently remarked that: I2.

"Child of the British Raj, Indian nationalism certainly was, but to expect one to believe that the British authorities blessed its cradle would be to strain credulity to the breaking point."

Maybe! The Viceroy, it is said, 'began to shower curses on it'. That may be true, also. But the Viceroy who showered curses could have even banned such socio-political organizations cropping up in the country, and he had power to do that. In those days no one had known to raise any voice of opposition over such things. But the truth was that the people slept, and the Viceroy did not ban the organization. On the other hand, he blessed it, and sometimes as a ruler and protector of law and order, he cursed it when people took law into their own hands. That was right. No ruler could go on blessing the anti-Government organizations, if the latter indulged in unconstitutional activities. Moreover, freedom should be earned by fighting and suffering, and it should not be like simply taking what was offered in a platter. In fact, sixty years later when the country became free, history had to say that freedom was not earned substantially but the alien power just relinquished its hold on the country gracefully and then left. Indeed, that was what really happened in spite of books after books on the subject, produced mostly by hirelings and bookmakers of book markets.

The second session of the Indian National Congress was held at Calcutta on the 29th December I886, with Dadabhai Naoroji presiding. The third annual session was held at Madras in Decemeber I887, with Badruddin Tyabji in the chair. Though Indians were made to occupy the chair, the proceedings were actually conducted by Englishmen like Hume, Yule, Wedderburn, Cotton and others. Sir Allan Hume's clarion call to the people of India, was this: I3.

"Sons of India, why sit idle? Nations by themselves are not made".

His oratory, it was said, moved the entire gathering. The fifth annual Congress sess-

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II. Sir Reginald Coupland- 'The Indian Problem'.
I2. A book review by J.P.S., Times of India of 7-6-I970.
I3. D.G.Tendulkar- 'Mahatma', Vol.I.

session was held in Bombay in 1869, presided over by George Yule and W.Wedderburn, A distinguished visitor on the occasion was Charles Bradlaugh who had come from England. Addressing the gathering of delegates, Bradlaugh said, that:

"Born of the people, trusted by the people, I will die for the people and I know no geographical and racial limitations."

Apart from these great innovators of freedom movement in India, there were many local luminaries among the Europeans to din in the ears of the people the ideals of patriotism and nationalism. One such outstanding person was Francisco Louis Gomes of Goa. In the Western India and Bengal several such Europeans worked both in the fields of literature and politics to rouse the slumbering nation. Gomes said, that:

"India is my country; I was born in India, once the cradle of poetry, philosophy, and now their tomb."

Prof. Maxmueller's admiration to India's heritage and culture was simply astounding. He said that: 14.

"If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has mostly pondered on the great problem of life, and has found solution for some of them--------I should point to India."

That same sentiment is echoed by the modern American historian, Will Durant, who said that: 15.

"India was the motherland of our race--------She was the mother of our philosophy --------Mother of much of our mathematics---------Mother of the ideals embodied in Christianity---------Mother through the village community, of self-government and democracy. Mother India is in many ways the mother of us all."

Dr. Paul Deusseau, the great German Indologist, wrote his feelings in poetry, on the eve of his leaving Calcutta in 1893, that:

"Oh, Sun of India, what have we committed, that we must leave thee and thy children now; thy giant trees, thy flowers---------And you our Indian friends, whose hearty feeling- deep sympathy with you has fast obtained; from Ceylon to Peshawar and Darjiling. Are you now lost to us, as soon as gained?"

But the Indians did not seem to have gone very far ahead. Very few men were there with University education, and they joined civil service. For two or three decades after the founding of the Congress organization, the whole show was put up by the Europeans. This made the grand old man, Sir Octavian Hume to blurt out again to those few Indians who were in the forefront, stating that: 16.

"You meet in Congress, and glow with momentory enthusiasm. You speak much, and eloquently, too, but the Congress closes, and every one of you goes off straight away on his private business. Years ago I called on you to be up and doing; years ago I warned that 'Nations by themselves are made', and have you heeded these counsels?"

That was the tradition of the western nationalism and liberalism that nourished the country till Annie Besant, the last of the great European scholar-patriots landed in India. That did not mean that there were no stalwarts among the Indians of the time.

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14. Autobiography of Prof. Maxmueller,
15. The Oriental Heritage by Will Durant,
16. 'Tilak' by D.V.Thamankar- P. 126.

Certainly, there were, but they were very few, about a dozen and not more, in all India. Those few Indian nationalists, all English educated, are named here to see to what extent they influenced nationalism and patriotic fervour in the country. A close look into their public activities reveal that they were inspired to get into public life by the European statesmen and scholars who were in India.

Raja Rammohan Roy was the first of the galaxy of great Indian leaders. He is called the Father of Modern India. Born in I772, he laid the foundation of public life in Bengal. A great scholar of Persian, Sanskrit and Arabic, he preached against idolatory and superstition. As there were no English schools, he learnt English privately and so also Greek, Latin and Hebrew. He was a renowned writer and a pioneer in Indian journalism among Indians. In I830 he left for England to represent the grievances of the titular Mughal emperor of Delhi, Akbar Shah, and for that purpose, he was invested with the title of Raja, and given the seal of office. His visit to England was actually made possible by the patriotic Englishmen in India, and he was in England in April I83I. At the coronation of king William IV, a seat was assigned to him among the ambassadors of free countries. He visited Paris in I832, and was received with highest honours. He took up the cause of the Indian political reforms very fervently. He had wished to visit America but died suddenly in Bristol in September I833.

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was another great scholar and educator. He was born in I8I7. He had realised that during the Great Mutiny in I857, the Muslims suffered more than Hindus. He was in civil service and rose up to the position of subordinate judge in the I850s. He declared that, "Had the Indians been represented in the Councils the grievances of the people would have been communicated from time to time to their rulers." He had belonged to a high family of the Mughal times, and he rose up to be an Indian member of the Governor-General's legislative council. Later he turned out to be a Muslim nationalist, and dominated the Muslim public life in India, and opposed the idea of Muslims joining hands with the Indian National Congress. In I876, he founded the Muslim League of Aligarh, and also a Muslim Education institution there. Sir Syed Ahmad died in I898.

Dadabhai Naoroji was born in I825. He was responsible for establishing more than thirty organizations in India and also in England. He laid the foundation of woman's education in Bombay in I849, and started a Gujarati journal also. In I854, he was a professor of mathematics at the Elphinstone College, Bombay, and later joined the Cama's firm in London. There he worked as a professor of Gujarati at the University College, founded the East India association in I886, became a minister of Baroda state in I874, a nominated member of Bombay legislative council in I885, and an elected member of the British parliament in I892, the first Indian to get elected to the parliament of Great Britain. He presided over the Indian National Congress sessions three times, and went on delegation to Europe many times. Dadabhai Nacroji died in I9I7.

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Mahadev Govind Ranade was born in I842. He was an eminent judge in which capacity he served for thirty years. He was also a noted historian, economist and social reformer. He was a greatly respected person for his saintly qualities and moderate views. He founded the Indian National conference in I887. He drew to his side a good number of moderate politicians out of whom Gokhale was one, who said that "for about thirty years he (Raanade) presented our highest thought and our highest aspirations". Raanade was an ardent admirer of the British administration and the Government and their system of education. Mahadev G. Ranade died in I90I.

Among the rest of the Indian patriots of the time, Prof. Bhandarkar, Badruddin Tyabji, Sir N. Chandavarkar, Dayananda Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda, W.C.Benerjie, K.T. Telang, Dinshaw E. Wacha, Sir Subramania Iyer, Viraraghavachar, Surendranath Benerjie and a few others. Among these stood the towering personality of Sir Pherozshah Mehta, another admirer of the British system of education and administration. He said in I9I4 that:

> "My steadfast loyalty is founded upon the rock of hopes and patience. I accept the British rule, as Raanade did, as dispensation so wonderful--------It would be a folly not to accept it as a declaration of God's will."

Among the younger nationalists of the time, the prominent ones were Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bepinchandra Pal, Madanmohan Malaviya, Lala Lajpat Rai, Gopalakrishna Gokhale, Aurohindo Ghose and a few others. All these men were outstanding in their respective fields although some of them were extremists, some moderates, some liberals and yet a few were scholarly and constructive in their outlook. All these were the earlier batch of great products of the British education and several of them were wonderful and stirring orators. They were all conversant in English language to an extent that their fluency would shame any Englishman. An English aristocrat, Henry Nevinson, once said about an Indian orator, that:

> "Except for Gladstone, I have heard no speaker use the rhetorical style with more assurance and success--------It was an oratory such as I suppose, Cicero loved to practice."

This was what he said after he listened to the oratory of the trumpet-voiced Surendranath Benerjie, Bepinchandra Pal and Pherozshah Mehta. In that great tradition, India had two Nobel laurettes in Tagore and Raman, in literature and science respectively, a silver tongued orator of the British empire in Srinivasa Sastri and that Nightingale of India, the poetess Sarojini Naidu. That was the outcome of a couple of centuries-old British rule in India that finally produced a Gandhi. Prof. Horace Wilson had said long back in I845, that:

> "The British Government in India had made the various races of India known to all the world--------through their literature, their institutions, their laws, their traditions etc."

And here is an actual assessment of the situation that was rightly said: I7.

> "The contribution of British education and administration to the development of India and Pakistani nationalism and the modern civilizations should be regarded to

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I7. Hafeez Malik- Muslim Nationalism in India & Pakistan.

in a much more positive light than one could think of. Hindus believed that the British Raj favoured the Muslims, and Muslims believed that they favoured the Hindus. The British Government brought to light that regard for the impartiality of law which forms the foundation of the highly successful modern national communities of India and Pakistan."

Further, it was said that:

"Syed Ahmad Khan's separatist policy was intensified during the later years of his life. This was in no small measure, influenced by aggressive Hindu nationalism in the Indian National Congress, personified by Bal Gangadhar Tilak (I856-I920), a Chitpavan Brahmin of the Deccan."

From this point, however, the Indian nationalism took a sharp narrow turn among Muslims and Hindus of India, ~~and A~~ sound foundation that was built for the freedom movement by the Europeans seemed to have begun to shatter with the reactionary Hindu elements like Tilak, Savarkar, Aurobindo, Malaviya and others on one side, and Syed Ahmad Khan, Mohin-ul-Mulk, Muhammad Ali, Shoukat Ali and others on the other side. Thus a breach had already begun to take place, and the dawn of this twentieth century did not seem to have been very auspicious for the Indian politics. After Surendranath Benerjie's arrest for the contempt of court in I883-84, the second political prisoner of the modern times was Tilak in I896-97, who had devoted his time reminding the Hindus of Maharashtra of the legacy of their past struggle against the alien Muslim rulers of India and the British who had replaced them. Serious riots between Hindus and Muslims had broken out in Bombay and Poona in I893-94. Tilak accused the British Government of having instigated the Muslim attacks on the Hindus, and also added that: I8.

"The Muslims have assumed a boorish and arrogant attitude which is the result of the encouragement they receive from the Government--------."

Immediately after the riots, Tilak started the anti-cow killing society, which was intended and regarded as a direct provocation of the Muslims who did not think it sacriligious to eat beaf. Tilak's propaganda also became steadily anti-British "who in the hey-day of its power, did not tolerate political agitation, but generally observed a hands-off policy in regard to religion." I9.

After Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, the Muslims of India lacked an outstanding leader to serve their interests. In I906, the all India Muslim League was founded under the leadership of Mohm-ul-Mulk. The British nationalists helped them too in that venture. But the Hindu writers and politicians said that the British did so in order to divide the nation. If that was so it was just said that even the Indian National Congress came into being through the efforts of Englishmen. What the Viceroy Lord Dufferin did in I885 when the Congress was founded, the Viceroy Lord Minto did in I906 when Muslim League was founded. Minto was happy "to receive a Muslim deputation" at which the demand for the separate representation for the Muslims in the Councils was made and conceded in principle by the Viceroy.

I8. Hafeez Malik- Muslim Nationalism in India & Pakistan,
I9. " " " " " "

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Therefore, it seemed superfluous for the people of India, be they Hindus or Muslims, Congressmen nor non-Congressmen, Communists or communalists, extremists or moderates, or any such groups to blame the Britisher for the ancient, medieval, modern and even the most recent follies committed by the Indians themselves. Indians thought that by repeatedly abusing the foreigner they could hide all their weaknesses and sluggishness and selfishness, or they might be thinking that a false statement, if repeated a thousand times, might at least seem to be truth. The modern historians are yet to open their hearts and speak out objectively as to who were the people who played the role of traitors during the different periods of the country's history. The modern historical events of the British times and even of the later days are too clear that no useful purpose would be served by trying to brush aside the inconvenient facts.

When the British patriots initiated the freedom movement with the founding of the Indian National Congress, they had no regional, sectional, linguistic or religious interests. For them the whole India and her people were one. Their only motive was to see that the people of India became politically free. With the departure of Allen Hume, George Yule, Samuel Smith and Henry Cotton, only Sir Wedderburn remained as an active Englishman to guide the freedom movement in a constitutional way, and later he too left the country to continue his work from England. However, the people of India seldom had the interest of the nation as a whole. Every Hindu leader behaved like a Hindu and every Muslim leader like a Muslim and, as a result, their politics too took a very narrow, selfish, clannish, religious and sectional bias. They would talk on big things but they rarely showed them in action. That was a pity.

During the two decades before the first world war, the Congress sessions, as already said, were a stale affair. But then there were noisy elements creating some noisy scenes. If Sir Syed and some other minor Muslim leaders were the vestiges of the Mughal regime, those few extremist Mahratta politicians like Tilak and Savarkar, and the sobre Ranade and Gokhale, seemed to have been the products of the Peshwa regime with a kind of Shivaji spirit in them, and in either case all their loyalties were narrow, sectional as well as religiously biased. In 1906-07, the differences between the Hindu extremists and moderates widened while the Muslims, scared of Hindu militancy, rightly agitated for separate representations all through.

With this stand taken by Muslims of India, it seemed that a seed was slowly sprouting to emerge as a poisonous plant, and that plant was to become one of rabid communalism and religious bigotism. The Muslims clamoured for separate representations while the Hindus delivered fiery speeches cursing everyone on the earth. Tilak's extremism and communalism certainly spoiled the trend of Indian politics. The moderates like Gokhale delivered scholarly speeches, and all these politicians were at their best when they attacked the English. Presiding over the Congress sessions of 1905, Gokhale compared Lord Curzon's viceroyalty to the rule of Aurangzib although that comparison

was far-fetched. Lord Curzon might have had 'monopolised power for all time and talk all the while of duty', but he was also a sensible ruler that India had at that time. He did love India as most of the British statesman but one cannot be sure about the love the Indian politicians supposed to have had for the country. Gokhale had nothing to say on the problem of the Muslims and on their demand for separate representation.

Gokhale, the sobre politician, had claimed to have been a ~~dedicated~~ disciple of the saintly Raanade who had admired the British rule, the British education, their administration, etc. But Gokhale's speeches did not show anything to say that he had followed Raanade. In England, he delivered some speeches during I908 and I9I0, when he said that: 20.

> "The whole system of Government was modelled on Russian methods; it was a system unworthy of free England- unworthy of a country which glorified itself on the possession of constitutional liberty; it was a Government dependent largely on confidential police reports-------."

On another occasion, Gokhale said, that:

> "One evil of the British rule is a steady dwarfing of the race in consequence of its exclusion from power--------Another evil is economic, and there I hold strongly that British rule has produced disastrous results."

There are many more speeches of Gokhale in that tone. He too wanted freedom, but at what cost, and in what great hurry! He did not seem to have thought of correcting the antiquated ways of his people before going to England 'to educate them on the impossibility of their dream of perpetual empire in India and the inevitability of Indian government-------.' These leaders had a lot to educate their own people. It seemed that the Indian leaders aimed only at exploiting the goodness of the Britisher and they did not seem to have concentrated on the social and economic development of their people. Without doing that, they went on attacking the British by their speeches, and more they indulged in their oratory the more cracks appeared in the body politic of the country.

The Minto-Morley Reforms of I909, was the first step towards the far-reaching constitutional progress of the country. That recognised the claims of Muslims. Lord Minto, the Viceroy of India, and Sir John Morley, the Secretary of State, tried to persuade the Muslims to accept a scheme of reservation of seats with joint electorates. They were however insistent that such electorates would not elect Muslims who would not satisfactorily represent their community. The Muslim claim was admitted and they never afterwards abandoned it. 2I.

The I909 Reforms satisfied the moderate Indian politicians, but John Morley was not for the parliamentary system in India as early as that. He said, that: 22.

> "Not one with more than you do I think it desirable or possible or even conceivable to adopt English political institutions to the nations who inhabit India. Assuredly not in your day or mine!"

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20. G.K.Gokhale- Speeches & Writings, Vol. II.
21. Sir Percival Griffiths- The British Impact on India.
22. Speeches of Sir John Morley.

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However, the Muslim voice in India became a powerful voice of minority community since 1906, and the British Government of India could not ignore their claims. It was here that the British are sometimes accused of favouring the Muslims, but in fact what they have done for them any Government would have done, and they had to do it. No Government could afford to sleep over the minority interests, but the Hindu leaders spent all their energy by simply abusing the British and not befriending the minorities, especially the Muslims. The principle of 'divide and rule' is a tool in the hands of any politician anywhere and it was not exclusively of the British. Our people in India adhere to the 'divide and rule' policy right from the family level and panchayat level to the levels of the State and Central Governments. However, with the reforms of 1909, the British did not do anything extraordinary to Muslims except asking them to accept the scheme of reservation of seats with joint electorates.

The outcome of the Minto-Morley reforms of 1909 was, that: i) in the Imperial Council the official majority was maintained, ii) the number of non-official members was increased, iii) the principle of election was accepted, iv) the scope of discussion on the public issues was extended, v) resolutions could be moved on official matters at the Council, vi) supplementry questions were allowed, and vii) an Indian member to the Governor-general's Council was appointed (and, Lord S.Sinha was the first to be appointed to the post.)

These were certainly the far reaching reforms in a country with only about ten percent of its population educated in the modern sense of the term, or those knowing just to write their names. In a country which had two equally powerful groups like Hindus and Muslims, it was only a third party Government such as the British that could do something to satisfy every group. But the Hindu nationalists rightly thought that it was their country, and, their aggressive claims for political rights took the form of rabid communalism. In that way they did much to antagonise the non-Hindu elements. It was because of this parochial outlook of these extremists, they had lost their places in the all India field. Tilak's followers were confined only to Maharashtra area and many of the leading citizens did not support his extremist views. He could not even become a President of the National Congress as he failed to inspire the intellectual section of the country.

The activities of the other Hindu revolutionaries like Savarkar, Aurobindo and others were still more disappointing. They were all of one track of mind, who had held that Hindus alone were superior on earth and none else. These people were hailed as nationalists but in fact they were the misguided nationalists. They turned violent and committed a good many mistakes, if not crimes, in the name of religion and nationalism. All these people were the elements who were stirred by a new enthusiasm and they never thought very far ahead of their times. It was Savarkar who hailed the country as Hindu Rashtra which it certainly was and is, and he called the mutiny of 1857 as the first war of Indian independence. All these things were useful only to

to play politics because what he said or wrote were not only incorrect historically but also infuriated Muslims to become more vocal in their claims and to look upon every Hindu leader with great suspicion.

Anyway with the Minto-Morley reforms of I909, a new era began in the constitutional history of India. In fact, these Reforms were "in effect an attempt to meet the demand of the Indian politicians for parliamentary institution by a system of enlarged Durbars with somewhat wider powers than before". It was also said, that: 23.

> "It was only in I907, the British Government yielding to nationalist feelings in India and liberal pressure at home, declared their policy to be 'gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible Government in India as an integral part of the British empire-----."

Here was the beginning of the struggle for power between Hindus and Muslims, when both these major groups of India's populace looked to the British for their salvation. There was, however, one main difference between these people. The Hindu leaders always felt that India was theirs, and the British were the intruders, and they were in need of SWARAJ or self-Government and nothing else. The Muslims, however, from the days of Sir Syed Ahmad to that of Poet Iqbal, thought that they had equal rights in India, and the British were after all the inheritors of the Mughal kingdom, and that they could never hope to get any political or constitutional rights from Hindus who were of course in a greater majority.

Therefore, the entire Indian politics from the year I906 and on were centred around these two major religious groups. The British government was then a comfortable onlooker and fence-sitter. They were accused by both Hindus and Muslims of being partial to one group or the other but, in fact, any Government in that position could do only what the British did in those days, and yet the British did more than anyone had expected. They led the country into transition stage by stage and with dignity and calm, both during the great wars and peace times. People at the White Hall certainly knew as to when their days in India would end. Those old British nationalists who had left for England saw that politics in India was going astray with communal or religious twist given to it by Hindu and Muslim extremists. The dreams of Hume, Yule, Bradlaugh, Wedderburn and others were no more. Those Englishmen had fought for the Indian freedom with a spirit of individual liberty and fraternity. They had never dreamt that politics in India would later be dealt with by the third-raters who quarrelled on grounds of religion and language and even caste. This approach of the Indian politicians reduced the all India concept of freedom movement to a farce, But the people of India were hardly able to understand their leaders or their politics.

Those extremist Hindu bigots were thus the cause for provocation. The Muslims got bitter about that, and they also found that the Indian Councils' Act of I892, had failed to give adequate representation to them. All this, together with Tilak's

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23. E.W.R.Lumby: The Transfer of Power in India- P. I2.

politics, caused the birth of Indian Muslim League in I906, when the Viceroy's wife, Mary Minto, 'poured into her diary' on the Ist October of that year, stating that that had been 'a very eventful day, as someone said to me, an epoch in Indian history'.

That was certainly correct. From then on both the religious groups fought for their own rights in the name of nationalism which they never had visualised. The British Government tried hard to make these people national-minded, and to do so, they thought, education was the primary need. Hume and others of the earlier days had found it very difficult to bring those tattered groups of people of varied cultures, castes, languages, etc together. That was why the Viceroy Dufferin was particular to tell the innovators of the Congress movement to give priority to the social regeneration before they embark on political movement. Even till I882, in the whole of the undivided India, there were only 65 arts colleges, 8,635 FAs, 3,284 BAs, and 536 MAs. Only at the presidency metropolis of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras most of the educated men had concentrated, and as such, there was a dire need to initiate religious, cultural and educational movement in India because the country was still in the dark.

The time when Mrs. Annie Besant came to India to rouse the masses, was opportune. She set herself the task of awakening national pride and stirring up new demands. "I am an Indian tom-tom", she declared, "waking up all the sleepers so that they may wake up and work for their Motherland." Annie was no hollow politician; she was a dynamic scholar, religious reformer, orator and writer! It was said that: 24.

> "Certainly no Hindu has done so much to organize and consolidate the Indian religious and political movement as Mrs. Annie Besant--------There were few men in official positions inclined to follow the path taken by Mrs. Besant in championing the superiority of Indian religions over Christianity."

Francis Hutchins said in continuation, that:

> "All those Indians, some of whom were noisy extremists like Tilak, a man who possessed ~~western~~ western daring and eastern craft, is allowed to escape the imputation that he is a victim of poison poured into his ear by the European (reformers like Hume, Yule, Wedderburn and others)"

Hutchins further affirmed in agreement with Valentine Chirol saying that: 25.

> "If there had been no Allan Octavian Hume, no Charles Bradlaugh, and especially no Annie Besant, there might have never been a nationalist movement in India------".

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24. F. Hutichins- The British Imperialism in India- P.I67.
25. Valentine Chirol quoted by Francis Hutchins- P.I9I.

CHAPTER II.

THE CLASH BETWEEN TWO PERSONALITIES .

Two persons- one from the West and the other from the East, met. After a few casual meetings they seriously faced each other. The two great souls seemed to have somehow clashed. A woman in her sixties and a man in his forties, had made their way up- both were imbued with a spirit of religion, full of originality, universal outlook, and of course, upright and honest. Both of them respected each other, understood each other and yet they were incompatible to each other in their temperaments. Both of them would agree on the methods to pursue but more often they disagreed on certain fundamentals and on their political principles and moralities.

Those two persons were none other than Annie Besant and Mohandas Gandhi. For the people of India, who are neither white nor black but somewhere in-between, and mostly brown, there was difficulty to understand these two. Annie was an European whereas Gandhi was purely of the Indian soil. That made a lot of difference, and people saw that difference. To add to that Annie always spoke in English and she was a world-renowned orator whereas Gandhi was nothing of the sort. He spoke calmly and in a subdued voice, and in India he had made it a point to talk in his native Gujarati or in Hindi. That was a time when people of India were clamouring for SWARAJ or political freedom and for SWADESHI or home-made goods. In Gandhi they had a SWADESHI nationalist whereas Annie, they thought, was a PARDESHI or a foreigner. Other than that, people were incapable of finding out the true merits or demerits of any gods or goods. Their newly acquired Western education did not take them too far, either. Even that made a lot of difference when not even five per cent of the Indian people of the last century had any education to speak of!

Annie Besant came to India from England in 1893, in her 45th year. In the same year Mohandas Gandhi had left India for South Africa as a young barrister, and then returned to India after twenty years in 1914, in his 45th year. Annie had all her share of trials and struggles in life till then and she came out of fire, pure as crystal, and that was during the earlier twenty years of her stormy life from 1873 to 1893. Similarly Gandhi had gone through such exercises with his belief in self-suffering and as a fighter for truth and justice, and that was during the earlier twenty years of his life in South Africa from 1894 to 1914.

The difference in age between these two social and political reformers and stormy petrels, was twenty-two years. Annie Wood was born in London in 1847 as a commoner but turned aristocrat; Mohandas Gandhi was born in Kathiawad, Gujarat, in 1869, as an aristocrat but turned commoner. Annie was every inch a lady, graceful, emotional, eloquent, dashing as well as spirited with an enormous flair and passion for public service. Gandhi, on the other hand, was one of dignity and simplicity with a passionate love and dedication for the service of his country.

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However, now a time came when these two personalities faced each other. A saintess and a saint, an idealist and a realist, an orator and a preacher, and so on. Both Annie and Gandhi were almost alike in spirit, sincerity of purpose, idealism, patriotism, universalism, leadership magnetism, etc. The date of birth of Annie was the Ist October I847, and that of Gandhi the 2nd October I869. Though years apart, that was only a few hours difference, they having been born in the same month and within twenty-four hours and astrologically it did make a lot of difference.

Therefore, it seemed somehow as to how the two, even if they were gods, could agree on any basic issues. How could the two tall trees be exactly the same either in height or girth? Vyasa and Valmiki- both were great but they were not alike in many respects. The Buddha and Christ were great teachers and prophets but they were basically different. The Sindhu and the Ganga are both great waterways and yet they are not the same in many ways. Therefore, how could these two mortals and of different race, colour, sex, mould and creed, could be the same? How can they agree at least in some basic concepts? And, why they didn't agree?

Annie and Gandhi were certainly different and they clashed. They openly disagreed on some issues while they openly respected each other. Annie, the woman, loudly proclaimed those differences whereas a discreet Gandhi proved to have been more vocal in that by his silence.

Annie Wood had an Irish parentage from her mother's side, and her father William Wood, was half Irish. Annie lost her father when she was only four, and she grew up with the loving care of her mother. "My darling mother certainly spoiled me", she said. "She never allowed a trouble of any kind to touch me and cared only that all worries should fall on her, all joys on me." I

Mohandas Gandhi, of course, had an orthodox Hindu parentage. He was "essentially of the flesh, too much the ordinary child, who was nursed at his mother's breast and who cried as children do to make their lungs strong." 2.

Annie's early life, nevertheless, was that of sorrow and confusion, though she grew up under the loving care of her pious mother. As a young girl of ten, with ~~PAM~~ 'PARADISE LOST' and a good many other scriptures on her lips, and always swinging around in her lawns, Annie's was a life of constant yearning to know the unknown and unseen powers. In fact, a sort of mysticism was taking place in her mind without herself knowing about that. When alone and while in her teens, she often lectured to the empty benches at the Sisby Church imagining as though she was addressing a big crowd, she said.

But Gandhi was not nurtured with that sort of broodings. He was the last child and the third son of his father Karamchand and mother Putlibai, who had four children.

"He never went to preach the gospel of freedom as a comparative child. Instead Gandhi had merely lurked in the kitchen of the palace in somewhat dubious company—

I 'Annie'- The Autobiography- the I939 Ed.
2 "Out of Dust" by D.F.Karaka.

company--------Nor had Gandhi's reading of books gone any further than those strictly prescribed for his work, and he seems to have led that aimless life which as the son of a Dewan of an Indian state, it was fit and proper to lead." 3.

Annie Wood was entirely a different girl. She had begun to make searching inquiries on the Universe and of the natural phenomena when she was in her teens. For her, Truth was God and, in fact, she echoed countless times her strong adherence to the basic principles of morality and ethics. She fought against superstition of the Christian religion, and in that she did not spare anyone, even her own mother. She recollected that: 4.

"Against harshness I had been rigid as steel, but it was hard to remain steadfast when my darling mother, whom I loved as I loved nothing else on the earth, threw herself on her knees before me imploring me to yield. It seemed like a crime to bring such anguish on her, and I felt as a murderer as the snowy head of hers was pressed against me. And yet to live a lie? Not even to her was that shame possible-------."

On the death of Uthamchand, Gandhi's grandfather, in the same year of his birth, his father Karamchand, became the Dewan of Porbandar. So Gandhi was treated as a son of a Dewan or as a young prince when he was a small boy. But he said that his 'intellect must have been sluggish and my memory raw". In 1879, he entered the Rajkot school, and later the Kathiawar High School in Gujrat.

"He had a strong religious flavour, for an youngster; Gandhi would sit down with his legs crossed, and shaking his head in tune with the rhythm of the recital, he would listen with rapt attention to the Bhagwad Gita-------." 5.

Annie Wood, after her normal studies under the care of an understanding nurse, Miss Maryat, the sister of the novelist, who was largely responsible for her early education, got married when she was twenty, to a clergyman, the Vicar of Sibsy, Lincolnshire, Rev. Frank Besant, in 1867. They had two children, one boy Digby, and a daughter, Mable. As days passed on, her married life became too dull for her. She was too much active as well as assertive. She could not be a quiet house-wife. As a result of that she had to meet with a series of troubles. The incompatibility of her married life, the sickness of her children, the pecuniary problem and her own mental vibrations put her in a great jeopardy. Six years after her marriage, Annie lost her religious faith and that was because, by that time, she found that religion in its accepted form, was just a humbug. Finally she resolved to dissolve their marriage and obtain a divorce. "I met and conquered my first religious doubt---------I ought never to have married", said Annie bitterly.

Mohandas Gandhi's was entirely a different story. At the age of 13, according to the then Hindu tradition, he was married to Kasturibai Makanji, daughter of Seth Gokuldas Makanji, chosen and approved by his parents. "They were married with the benediction of a religion that knew no divorce and in which Fate worked in queer ways its wonders

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3. D.F.Karaka- Out of Dust".
4. Annie- The Autobiography- the 1939 Ed.
5. Gandhi- 'Experiments with Truth' & 'Mahatma' by G.D.Tandulkar, Vol. I.

to perform". Gandhi characterised this THAMAASHA of the Hindu early marriages later on thus:

> "Two innocent children were unwittingly hurling themselves into the ocean of life. Marriage then becomes nothing more than the prospect of good clothes to wear, drum beating, marriage processions, rich dinners and a strange girl to play with."

Mohandas's father died in 1885 when he was still a young student, and the responsibility of the family fell on the shoulders of his elder brother.

Annie Besant at the other end, was becoming more dashing and more practical. Much of her time in her early twenties, was taken for her divorce proceedings and sickness of her child, Mable. Annie suffered in many ways and that period of her sorrow became her momentous time to know more and more of the cruel world, injustice, dishonesty, irreligion and superstition. She gradually began to turn away from ~~the~~ religion. Religion, as she and others understood at that time, was just deception. She saw God only in Truth, Justice and Morality. She went about announcing all this boldly. She turned out to be an atheist although in her heart of heart she was not! She was a woman of God. She held the argument what a great atheist had held, that: 6.

> "It is necessary to put briefly the atheistic position. for no position is more continuously and more persistently misrepresented. Atheism is without God. It does not assert NO god------I know not what you mean by God; I am without any idea of God; the word GOD is to me a sound conveying no clear or distinct affirmation. I do not deny God because I cannot deny that of which I have no conception, and the conception of which, by its affirmer, is so imperfect that he is unable to define it to me."

Mohandas Gandhi in his teens, was a young man as any other boy of his age, but in some ways he was different also. His friends took him into many sinful acts which he promptly confessed. "I went into the jaws of sin but God in His infinite mercy protected me against myself". Gandhi was cautious against any sinful act, however small it might have been. In school, he did very well in Sanskrit, English and mathematics. He matriculated from the Kathiawar High School which was under Bombay University, in 1887. Later he went to Bhavanagar College but found that he had to wait for three years to become a graduate. When asked as to what made him to go to England, Gandhi replied: 'In a word, ambition'. He also added that when he was incessantly brooding over his future, 'an old friend of my father advised me to go to England and take the robe; he, as it were, fanned the fire that was burning within me.' 7.

Annie, in her twenties, had already become a stormy petrel in the social life of England. Since she had believed in atheism and got herself involved in the rousing activities of Charles Bradlaugh, she had a lot of trouble from her divorced husband and her opponents who advised Rev. Frank Besant to take custody of his children after court proceedings against her. No doubt, Annie had to go through a great strain and mental agony in those days.

After legally separating from her husband, Annie, with Charles Bradlaugh, became

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6. 'Annie'- The Autobiography- the 1939 Ed.
7. G.D.Tendulkar's MAHATMA & Gandhi's 'My Experiments with Truth'.

the co-editor of the NATIONAL REFORMER, and vice-President of the National Secular Society. Throughout her numerous battles, both in her domestic as well as public spheres, Bradlaugh was her helpful associate. Annie's atheism was essentially godly, fully divine, which the superstitious religious bigots failed to understand. She wrote that: 8.

> "To a woman of my temperament, filled with a passionate desire for the bettering of the world, the elevation of humanity, a lofty system of ethics, was of even more importance than a logical intellectual conception of the Universe; and, the total loss of all faith in a righteous God only made me more strenously assertive of the blinding nature of duty and the overwhelming importance of conduct------No thought was more constantly in my mind than that of the importance of morals."

This was Annie Besant who became a victim of cynicism and evil gossip of the people who knew not what they were saying and doing. But she went on unheeded and undaunted to work and work and reach her goal. She became a stout champion of Truth, Justice and Morality in social and political life of her country. This was in the I870s.

When Mohandas Gandhi had arranged to go to England, there was a good deal of opposition from the elderly members of his family, even for a good purpose like prosecuting studies. They were under the impression that the young man of the western countries simply drank, gambled, indulged in sex, indiscreetly ate meat and so on. With all that, they decided to cut across the religious and caste barriers and the ancient prejudices, and sent Mohandas to England, and in that he was ardently supported by his brother. But their orthodox mother would not leave him so easily, but he said: "I cannot alter my resolve to go to England. I think the caste should not interfere in this matter". However, before leaving, the young Gandhi swore that he would live a celibate life in England and would never touch drink and never eat meat and so on. "His attitude to vegetarianism was the only phase of his experiment with Truth. It was one of the early phases." 9.

That was the attitude of the future fighter in India for the SWADESHI or home-made goods, SWADESHI language, SWADESHI education and SWARAJYA or SWADESHI Government. He wanted to acquire the PARDESHI or foreign education after himself going to a PARA-DESH or foreign land. Maybe, Gandhi might have had his own arguments for all this, and one should ~~knew~~ not forget the fact that he was a clever ~~lay~~ lawyer, and wiser one, too!

Gandhi left for England on the 4th September I888. On his way in the ship, he wore a black suit. He touched no meat or wine. He got himself admitted into the Inner Temple on the 6th November I888. Gradually he got accustomed to the English society, English manners, English dress etc. He even took part in dancing. As a strict vegetarian he tried "gorge himself on oat-meal porridge in the morning, and when hungry for lunch, a vegetarian restaurant in London "was like the first drop of rain after the draught had parched the fields of corn."

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8. Annie- The Autobiography- the I939 Ed.
9. D.F.Karaka- 'Out of Dust' & 'My Experiments with Truth'- by Gandhi.

As a student in London, Gandhi was increasingly in touch with the Western thought. The Jain religious influence "over him made him take refuge in asceticism to get a true perspective of himself rather than seek an artificial outlet in self-indulgence." His training as a barrister did not lower his inclination for religion. His two-and-a-half years' stay in England from November 1888 to July 1891, was a very formative perio in his life.

By this time, Annie, the young woman, had already become a great public figure in all Europe, and she was known even in America. She was a born fighter despite disappointments she suffered early in her life. Personally too she had become a woman-ascetic or a YOGINI, and all ~~that~~ those religious and metaphysical thoughts flashed in her mind very early in her life, when she was in her twenties. Even with regard to her food habits, she became a strict vegetarian as though she was ordained to be one like that by some mystic powers. Mohandas Gandhi wrote about this after some years, that: 10.

> "-------Why such unwholesome food produces an immediate effect on persons like us. When Lord Buddha ate the flesh he received his alms, his body fell dead. If through ignorance or oversight, eggs have been used in ~~Be~~ Mrs. Besant's food she vomits it."

Annie Besant, as a mother, was a loving woman. Because she was an atheist during those few troublesome days of her life, the Court decided that the custody of her two young children, Digby and Mabel, should go to her husband, but much of that decision of the court was engineered by her political opponents. Anyway that was a heartbreaking decision for a young mother to bear. She kept on visiting her children at her husband's quarters but even that proved to be very irksome, and gradually she had to turn away from them in sorrow. She wrote that:

> "Resolutely I turned my back on my children that I might spare them trouble, and determined that, robbed of my own, I would be a mother to all helpless children I could aid, and cure the pain at my own heart by soothing the pain of others."

Apart from her hundreds of speeches on social, educational and political matters, Annie was a very powerful writer also. As a co-editor of the NATIONAL REFORMER, she wrote very forcefully than any seasoned journalists. In her youth she produced numerous pamphlets and booklets such as 'A World Without God, Gospel of Atheism, the Christian Creed, Why I do not Believe in God, Life, Death and Immortality,' and other subjects and she handled the topics in a very easy manner. It was her clerical husband who understood little of her young bride that drove her to revolt against religion for which he stood. Then through Charles Bradlaugh, she turned to atheism, and from that point her search for God and Truth continued. With Bradlaugh she fought in courts her own divorce suits, and also suits concerning social matters. In the Knowlton Pamphlet episode she was the storm centre of the entire agitation, and during the elections of Charles Bradlaugh to the Parliament, it was again Annie who was his dynamic

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10. Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi- Vol.12, & 'Out of Dust' by D.F.Karaka.

and energetic helping hand: 11

"Of Charles Bradlaugh history has so far given every description except the only one that fits him. He was quite simply a hero, a single champion of anti-Christendom against seventy-seven champions of Christendom. He was not a leader; he was a wonder whom men followed and obeyed."

It was with this man of wonder and a great leader, Annie started her public career and then herself became a wonder. When she worked for the Freethought Movement and later in the English and European labour unions, people said that: 12.

"Annie Besant was also a wonder, a terrible opponent, had over-whelming personal force--------Before Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant, all others looked like pygmies."

In 1885, Annie joined the Fabian Society and the Social Democratic Federation. A leading newspaper of the day, commented that: 13.

"Socialism was now the one and only gospel of hers. She was present// at the Trafalgar Square riots, was elected to the London School Board, and with Herbert Burrows, organised the strike of the match-makers and founded their Union."

In between these multifarious activities, Annie's energy and dynamism took her to be a serious student of science and also a part-time and then a full-time teacher in one of the recognised institutions of the University. She brought up with her scores of earnest students and as a student and teacher of science, she was even able to become a honours graduate in science with Botany as her special subject. Annie was a practical and creative minded philosopher in action. Whatever the odds, she would not stoop to any base thing. In spite of her busy schedule both in her public and private career, she would say, that: 14.

"I dare not purchase peace with a lie. An imperious necessity forces me to speak the truth, as I see it, whether the speech pleases or displeases, whether it brings praise or blame."

On another occasion she said, that:

"Truth- I must keep stainless; she may lead me into wilderness, yet I must follow her; she may strip me of all love, yet I must pursue her-------My epitaph shall be this: 'She Tried to Follow Truth'."

Annie's most devoted biographer, Prof. Nethercot, summed up her career, that: 15.

"Through Rev. Charles Voysey she first turned to atheism, through Thomas Scott she turned to scepticism, through Moncure Conway she turned to rationalism and through Charles Bradlaugh she turned to materialism. Free-thought, individualism and political radicalism, suffering the ambiguous but delicious pangs of martyrdom and ostracism from the conventional society within which she had been brought up. She found her interest in the materialism and anti-supernaturalism of the new science--------."

Many people helped to influence her life apart from the above men. Dr. Edward B. Aveling, the scientist, George Bernard Shaw of the Fabian Socialism, Henry Hyndman

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11. George Bernard Shaw's writings,
12. George Arundale in Annie's Autobiography,
13. The Times, London, the 21st September 1933,
14. Annie- The Autobiography, the 1939 Ed.
15. Prof. Nethercot's Preface to his book.

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and Herbert Burrows- the social democrats, were her associates in her various campaigns, agitations and literary activities. Annie was thus a great social reformer, renowned orator, prolific writer and fearless journalist. She was a fluent speaker in French and German langauages, also. When she turned a Socialist, she literally broke away from his long time friend and mentor, Charles Bradlaugh, and yet they remained friends. As a teacher of science and later as a member of the London School Board, her contribution to the cause of education in general and the cause of woman's education in particular, was far-reaching. Hers was a dedicated service and that was "a movement of self-sacrificing devotion", and she appealed to people 'to give- not to take'. She was in the thick of her socialist campaigns, women's suffrage and labour struggles, strikes etc.

Here it is curious to note another far-reaching change taking place in Annie Besant's life. Till she reached her 40, one could say that she had gone 'through many lives'. The saga of her transformation from one idea to another or 'from one life to another', went on stage by stage. In London, strangely enough, Annie came in contact with the Russian lady, later settled in America and widely travelled all over, including India and Tibet, and the enunciator of the Theosophical doctrine or creed, Madame Helene P. Blavatsky. After visiting her a few times and after discussing with her on mysticism and metaphysics, Annie soon fell under her influence, and then determined to become a Theosophist. She said, that:

> "I knelt down before her and clasped her hands in mine looking straight into her eyes. 'Will you accept me as your pupil and give me the honour of proclaiming you my teacher in the face of the world?"

Yes, from then on, Helene Blavatsky became Annie's teacher and the latter in turn became an ardent Theosophist. That was after a long purposeful voyage of hers in the ocean of life only twenty years from 1869 to 1889: 16.

> "The precipitating factor in this conversion was the controversial, masculine Helene P. Blavatsky, whom she (Annie) eventually replaced as the most important figure in the mystical, occult, Theosophical Society."

This conversion of Annie did raise some controversy. Charles Bradlaugh expressed his surprise for the second time, the first time he did so when she turned a Socialist. There were many other opponents of hers who simply laughed and scoffed at her seasonal conversions and change of creeds and ideas and ideals. When Gandhi was a student in London, he had closely followed Annie's activities and, of course, of Charles Bradlaugh. He said, "Mrs. Besant was very much in the limelight and she had turned to theism from atheism. I had read her book, 'How I Became a Theosophist'." 17.

As a student Mohandas had done well in his London matriculation examination with French, English and Chemistry. He even thought of doing his higher studies in Oxford or Cambridge but he felt that it was a question of more money and more time and, therefore, he was not keen to prolong his stay there. Much of his time in London was taken

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16. Prof. Nethercot & Annie's Biography.
17. Gandhi: 'My Experiments with Truth'.

at the Inner Temple, where he did well. He took interest in religious studies and ethical institutions and found time to study the Bible, the Gita and some writings of Sir Edwin Arnold whom he was seeing in London very often. Gandhi was introduced to Theosophy by two of his young Theosophist friends, and he wrote, that:

> "In 1889, the two theosophist brothers took me to the Blavatsky Lodge and introduced me to Madame Blavatsky and Mrs. Besant. The latter had just then joined the Theosophical Society and I was following with great interest the controversy about her conversion."

But what was actually said about Gandhi's interest in Theosophy was that "he was not especially impressed by the high priestess (H.P.Blavatsky) of the movement, but he derived some pleasure at meeting Mrs. Annie Besant, who had just then joined the theosophists. In time Mrs. Besant would also become a high priestess, but was more scholarly, more intelligent and more understanding of human problems. Mrs. Besant was in love with India, while Madame Blavatsky believed that ultimate truth was to be found only in Tibet. "From being a free-thinker and an atheist, Mrs. Besant had recently turned to theism, and Gandhi was therefore disposed to regard her favourably." 18.

As far as Gandhi's interest in Theosophy was concerned, he 'got as far as an associate membership of the society but dropped it, feeling that he ought to know more'. Later, his friends "tried again, and on their advice he toiled through Madame Blavatsky's THE KEY TO PHILOSOPHY. Here he learned that "there is no religion higher than Truth; and all religions embody the same Truth." 19.

About Gandhi's own impression of Theosophy even after twenty years since his first contact with the theosophists, was the same. In a letter that he wrote to a friend from his Tolstoy Farm in South Africa, on the 8th May 1911, Gandhi said, that:

> "I have held since 1899 the same views that you do about Theosophy. They pressed me hard that year to join the Society but I refused in no uncertain terms, saying that, though the Society's rule respecting brotherhood appealed to me, I had no sympathy for its search for occult powers--------."

Gandhi seemed to have absorbed many ideas while studying religion and theosophy. "Theosophists often give the impression that while all religions are equal, Hinduism is more equal than others. Reading the KEY TO PHILOSOPHY, by Helene Blavatsky, Gandhi extracted one valuable moral at any rate, that Hinduism was worthy studying." 20.

From this another aspect of Indian mentality was evident, especially in the educated persons of those days. Those Indians of the upper class of the last two centuries had learnt to respect their own religion and culture through the Western scholars and through the Western education. Gandhi himself had to realise and understand the values of Hinduism through the books of Blavatsky, Arnold, Ruskin, Thoreau and others.

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18. 'Gandhi'- by Jeoffry Ashe,
19. Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi- Vol. II,
20. Robert Payne & Jeoffry Ashe on Gandhi.

Thus began Gandhi's 'dialogue with religion'.

Charles Bradlaugh, that freedom fighter for human rights and values, and a great friend of India, died in I89I. Most of the Indians who were then in England had attended his funeral, and Gandhi too was there. "For atheists like Bradlaugh, truth held the same place as God for others," said Gandhi writing about him after some time.

After two years and eight months in England, it was time for Gandhi to get back home. But then he had loved to stay on in England for some more time, both for education and for more enlightenment. 'Next to India', he said, "I would rather live in London than in any other place in the world.' 2I.

What Gandhi had felt in I89I, most people feel even today in I98I, after ninety years. That is evident by the fact and number of people from India and other countries staying in Western countries, especially in England, very often forcing their way in for education, avocation and to enjoy the privileges the democratic countries and system usually provide. What is heartening to know here is that Gandhi too did feel that way even in those days.

Gandhi returned to India as a barrister in July I89I. On the way in the ship, he changed his English dress and wore the Kathiawada costume. As he landed in Bombay, he was calmly told of the death of his mother, which fact had not been revealed to him till then while he was away. Later his elder brother took him to Nasik to perform some purificatory ceremony to assuage the wrath of his community.

As an active Theosophist, Annie was literally a hurricane now. From I89I onwards, she became a globe trotter almost every year during the next forty years of her life. She went about propagating and preaching her new creed with all vehemence and power. The objectives of the Theosophical Society, she declared, was to found 'a Universal brotherhood without distinction of race or creed; to forward a study of Aryan literature and philosophy, and to investigate unexplained law of nature and the physical powers latent in man. 22.

Annie's understanding of philosophical intricacies and her knowledge concerning all that, was amazing. She was well-versed both in the Western and Oriental philosophies. She wrote that: 23.

> "Men- whether they really and seriously believe that throughout the mighty Universe, in which our little planet is but a tiny speck of sand in the Sahara, this one planet only inhabited by living things! Is all the Universe dumb save for our life? Such preposterous belief was well enough when Christianity regarded our world as the centre of the Universe————."

For the people of India, it would be interesting to know that Annie Besant was one of the distinguished speakers at the World Parliament of Religions held at Chicago in I893 in which Swami Vivekananda too had participated. Annie had represented

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2I. G.D.Tendulkar's 'Mahatma'- Vol. I.
22. Annie- The Autobiography- I939 Ed.
23. " " " "

the world Theosophical Organization, and her oratory on the occasion, it was said, was extraordinary. She presented Theosophy to 3,000 audience and "rose to great heights of eloquence, so exhilerating were influences of the gathering." 24.

Here one should pause and evaluate the value and volume of contribution made by Mrs. Annie Besant to her country, England, as long as she lived there during the first forty-five years of her eventful life. Her most devoted biographer, Prof. Nethercot, pertinently asks us as to what would have been the difference to the world if Annie had never lived, especially during those days from 1873 to 1893, and then recounts her achievements stating that: 25.

> "i) The acceptance of women in English colleges would have been established somewhat later, ii) the acceptance of birth control as a respectable practice would also have been delayed, iii) the campaign for granting women equal rights with men would have lost a valuable supporter, iv) her absence from the London School Board would have delayed the achievement of free public education for children of both sexes, and the principle of furnishing free meals at public expense to children whose parents could not afford them would have been postponed, v) the early Fabian Society would have impressed itself much more slowly on the public mind if the lustre of her name and fame as an orator in its cause had been lacking. As a female strike leader and social reformer, her services would have been greatly missed."

Annie's conversion to Theosophy in 1869, like all her previous conversions, was also with a dramatic suddenness. She found a sensible religion in the tenets of Madame Blavatsky. On the latter's death in 1891, Annie Besant promptly became her successor as one of the two 'heads' of the inner Theosophical Organization called the Esoteric section. She ratified her new role by declaring that she had received 'phenomenally' letters from the Mahatmas. The other 'head' of this Esoteric section was W. Q. Judge, an Irish-American lawyer. It must be remembered here that when Annie emerged as 'a force' to be reckoned with, what the people must have forgotten was that she was an outstanding philosopher in action. A devoted Christian, turned an atheist with Truth as her banner and as God, then a theist, a materialist, a Fabian, a Socialist and finally a Theosophist. She worked, she preached and she wrote, and all that she did profusely. She was the mistress 'of all that she surveyed' even so early in her age. She was a great educationist, an intellectual of a high order, a social reformer with abundant commonsense, and a sturdy and yet a graceful woman of action and dynamic energy.

After his return from England, Mohandas Gandhi started to practice law and opened his office in Bombay. As all others who take to that profession, Gandhi too in the beginning was a funk at that. Though he came from a noted family, son of a DEWAN and a foreign returned barrister, young Gandhi's contact with people did not go very far enough. The ex-President of the Indian National Congress, Sir Pherozshah Mehta and Justice Badruddin Tyabji, were the leading advocates of Bombay in those days, and

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24. George Arundale's observations.
25. Annie- by Prof. Nethercot, Page 467.

with whom Gandhi was in touch. It was said that Gandhi "in his first case in the court, when he rose to cross-examine a witness he was too timid to speak and had to sit down again without asking a question." 26.

If Annie had her quarrels with the gods for making this world a miserable den of injustice, inequality, dishonesty, arrogance, etc, Gandhi too had his quarrel with men and their Governments in plenty and, to begin with, he had to develop a sort of prejudice against the Britisher in India although his experience in England about them was a happy one. An incident concerning his first experience in India is recounted thus: 27.

> "At his (Gandhi's) brother's request and much against his own judgment he went on one occasion to an European officer in Rajkot to ask for a favour on his brother's behalf. Gandhi had some slight acquaintance with the man. But Kathiawar was different from England and the Englishman in the East-of-Suez was not the Englishman he had met in England. It was Gandhi's first realization of the power of the Englishman in India, his first experience of his humiliation that his countrymen had suffered at the hands of their rulers. But Gandhi had brought it upon himself. He had gone to ask for a favour and courted rebuff."

In fact, what happened was that that man was arrogant. He got Gandhi physically ejected from his office after a minute's talk. Gandhi came out and his first reaction was to proceed in a court of law against the Englishman for having ejected him bodily. Hot-blooded, young, impatient and still fresh from England, he had imbibed the idea of ~~liberty~~ liberty and justice and freedom and he saw in this treatment he received a clear case for the law. 28.

These kinds of things are not uncommon in autocratic situations and governments. The question, however, does arise when it happens to the would-be great men and women like Gandhi and Annie. Obviously they would not simply swallow such bitter pills. In fact, when Gandhi complained about the above incident to Sir Pherozshah Mehta, the latter had told him to ignore the whole thing and that it was not after all worth the fuss. But Gandhi would not keep quiet until some others intruded to calm him. People with some respect and spirit of liberty, would not ignore such things. They use their inner sparks to lit and blaze all over in order to put down the repressive tendencies of such people or such Governments. That's what Annie did, and that's what Gandhi too had begun to do.

Gandhi, on this occasion, swallowed the insult, but profited from it as well. He records that: "Never again shall I place myself in such a false position; never again shall I try to explot friendship in this way." 29.

While in England, Gandhi, no doubt, had noticed a good part of Annie's public life. What he should have or must have noticed was the fact that Annie was a SATYAGRAHI of his conception. All her agitations were non-violent. She or her associates like

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26. John Gunther- 'Inside Asia'- Page 349,
27. D.F.Karaka- 'Out of Dust',
28. " " "
29. John Gunther- 'Inside Asia'- Page 349.

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Charles Bradlaugh, never indulged in the use of force or violence, nor did their agitations and even Court proceedings were of an unlawful nature. They would inform the authorities first about their future course of action or agitation, time, place, etc. In the case concerning the Knowlton Pamphlet or the matchmakers' strike, or other agitations, they never kept things secret nor conceal the facts from the authorities. Annie's method of civil disobedience was in line of true SATYAGRAHA movement but she never reconciled to it fully because of the violence it inevitably brought with it. Gandhi came twenty-two years after her to tell about it whereas Annie had already shown to the world what it all had meant.

Even though Mohandas Gandhi was the late-commer to explain the science of SATYAGRAHA he did explain that to the people in a practical way. According to him, it is an active resistance based on love, faith and sacrifice. SATYAGRAHA is nonviolence but it is not passive resistance. It is not a refuge of a coward, for, as between cowardice and violence, he would prefer violence. He also said that: 30.

> "I would risk violence a thousand times rather than the emasculation of the race——I believe that non-violence is infinitely superior to violence, forgiveness more manly than punishment——abstinance is forgiveness only when there is power to punish; it is meaningless when it pretends to proceed from the helpless creature."

Gandhi has also made it clear that SATYAGRAHA was not quite suffering. It is conscious and deliberate suffering, brought upon oneself of one's own free will and accord and with the consciousness of its strength and power, for, man is distinguished from the brute by his soul, and SATYAGRAHA, therefore, is the active, non-violent resistance of his soul.

In the case of Charles Bradlaugh and Mrs.Besant who fought many a social and political battle in England till 1891, the principle was not different, either. They saw that pursuasive means and not the coercive methods, were best suited. They did not find it necessary, even in their SATYAGRAHA, to subject oneself to physical assault and stubbornly cling to certain ideals and thus be allowed to be bullied or beaten. People with a make up of saintly outlook might like such physical exercises but that kind of exhibitionism in a civilized society would be out of place. Charles Bradlaugh who was described as a 'wonder' of his days, did strike back physically to those who tried to man-handle him during his numerous campaigns. Nonviolence was the 'summit of bravery' for him, and it was 'not a weapon of a coward', as Gandhi said. Bradlaugh had no time to dramatise ~~itself~~ 'self-suffering' nor did he like to be cowed down by brute force. Never did he disobey law also. Thus Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant remained as SATYAGRAHIs without the word SATYAGRAHA being in circulation at that time.

Therefore, to know the Gandhian technic of civil disobedience, it would be much better to know the technic of Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant who adopted similar methods many years prior to Gandhi's coming to the scene. Gandhi's had always been a technic of

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30. Fom the Collections of Gandhi's writings.

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'experimenting' and, in the process, he seemed to have been very often inconsistent in many of his methods and policies. But Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant had well-considered principles and programmes to fight for the rights and privileges of the people. They need not have to regret at the consequences of their action as Gandhi did, as 'Himalayan miscalculation', and yet he seemed to have stuck on to that same 'miscalculations' which Annie characterised, rather bitterly in her old age, as 'mock-fights'.

Annie Besant, as a Theosophist in the 1890s, was now busy with her mission of propagating her new creed in which she was eminently successful within a short time. She wrote brilliantly on subjects such as, 'World's Great Needs', 'Life After Death', 'The Building of the Cosmos', 'The Insufficiency of Materialism', 'Man and his Destiny', 'the political status of women', 'Theosophy- the science of soul' and so on. By the time ~~she was 45~~ Mrs. Besant was 45, she was a leading figure in the whole of Europe and in the world of Theosophy. As a renowned Theosophist, she had already had admirers and followers throughout the world. Even the founder-President, Col. Henry Olcott, began to derive a great amount of inspiration and knowledge from her.

At that time Gandhi was still an unsettled petty lawyer going between Rajkot and Bombay. He did not yet feel secure in his profession. In 1892, a young man of 23, he thought of plunging into state politics, but in a small state like that 'he saw no future'. He even thought of switching to some other job like teaching in some schools or colleges on part-time basis. In that way his twenty-month stay in India after returning from England was a sort of frustrating experience.

But then luck favoured Gandhi ere long. He was selected as a legal agent of a South African firm of Indian merchants, headed by Dada Abdullah. The monetary side of this offer was not impressive but the idea of getting away from India made him happy because, he thought, the misery in his country was due to the British rule. This assumption of young Gandhi was based only upon his ignorance of the misery and bloodshed in the country in the pre-British India. Anyway his prejudice to the British, although he got qualified in England, was due to his experience of getting bodily thrown out of his room by a British officer in Rajkot. Therefore, Gandhi thought that "it was better to be an under-paid barrister in an unknown country than to be briefless and humiliated in one's own." 31.

Look, this is the secret of all people who go abroad to make a living, and in this Mohandas Gandhi was no exception. For his private humiliation, Gandhi blamed the Government. 'Intrigue and conspiracy had always triumphed; it was a disappointing place for man with ideals', said a Gandhian biographer, but this defence of Gandhi is not convincing. 'A man of ideals' would not run away leaving the ideals to look after themselves. Anyway Gandhi left for South America to make a career and then prolonged his stay there and finally returned after twenty years.

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31. D.F.Karaka- 'Out of Dust'.

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Annie Besant too was a frustrated person in her younger days, but her desire to leave her own country in order to serve the world, was extraordinary in its content as well as spirit. Annie was highly qualified academically and she had built an economic base for herself. At the same time she was roused by her spiritual insight to play a bigger role than the one she played within her own country. Had she remained within her little England, the rest of the world would have lost all her magnificent services. As already said, Annie had sprung up from fire with purity and selflessness. She had gone through many tests to discover Life, Truth and God. "Without her spectacular conversion from atheism and materialism to mysticism, the anti-nationalistic movement toward the end of the nineteenth century would have lost a powerful force. As to her belief in occultism, one can express a complete but polite scepticism without impugning the sincerity of her own beliefs." 32.

Here it should also be added that "she possessed eloquence of a most exceptional kind and organising ability, and no light literary talent, shown in her numerous books and pamphlets." 33.

Here it should also be noted that both Annie Besant and Mohandas Gandhi, till they were 45, were not in India. The English lady was in England fighting for the rights and privileges of her people there, whereas Gandhi too did the same for the coloured indentured labour population in South Africa. Both of them stood against the British but from different platforms and countries. For Annie there was no problem of race or colour because she was amongst her own, but Gandhi seemed to have been in odds because of his race and colour which were entirely different from those against whom he fought. But this disadvantage that Gandhi had and which Annie hadn't was soon reversed when both of them plunged together headlong into Indian politics from the year 1914.

From then on, Annie had to struggle single-handed by sheer force of her character, perseverence, intellectual eminence, gift of the gab and leadership magnetism. As a white woman amidst the multitude of Asian browns most of whom were uneducated and ununderstanding, she had to struggle her way up to become one of the most colourful leaders of the country to rouse the national consciousness of the millions and then to become one of the distinguished Presidents of the Indian National Congress. She literally fought her way up with her foreign language, foreign accent, foreign complexion and as one belonging to the ruling class of people- the British. That was no ordinary feat of hers. As it was already said, if Annie had not at all born, so many things the countries where she worked, would have missed or delayed to come into shape. If her stirring leadership had not been there for India during those crucial times what would the country have missed? Yes, this narrative should explore an answer for this yet unanswered question.

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32. Prof. Nethercot on Annie Besant- P.467,
33. The Times, London, 21st September 1933.

CHAPTER III.

PERSONALLY THEY WERE OCEANS APART.

Mrs. Annie Besant stepped on the Indian soil after travelling from Sri Lanka to Tuticorin on the 16th November 1893 at 10.24 a.m. in the morning. Col. Henry Olcott, the founder President of the International Theosophical Society, had accompanied her from Sri Lanka. As Annie landed at Tuticorin, she was welcomed with a warm reception and tremendous ovation. She addressed to the crowd there at the railway station for a few minutes, and that was her first speech in India. She continued her journey by train to Bangalore and then to Vijayawada. She reached Adyar, Madras, the headquarters of the International Theosophical Society, on the 20th December 1893, just on the eve of the annual convention of the Society. On her way to Madras, at Bangalore, Vijayawada and other way-side stations she addressed to the people, and at Madras she lectured many times. From then on, Annie was an Indian, a Hindu, and her life was dedicated to India. She was then 46.

In the very same year and about six months before Annie's arrival in India, Mohandas Gandhi, after a twenty-month stay in India since his return from England as a barrister, left for South Africa, in April 1893. He sailed in a ship going through Zanzibar. It reached Durban in May 1893. Gandhi was only 24 at that time. He left his wife and two kids behind in India.

In South Africa, Gandhi didn't seem to have settled to a comfortable life. His fate put him in unavoidable situations from time to time and, that of course, seemed to have been the lot of this future Mahatma. He had his first taste of the British bureaucracy when he was in his home town in Rajkot. Now again in South Africa he had to experience such situations. His employers of the Dada Abdullah Firm, sent him to Pretoria giving him a first-class ticket. At nine'o clock in the night, Gandhi was at the railway station. The incident of his having been pushed out of the compartment that was reserved only for the white people happened then. The train steamed away and Gandhi sat alone at the waiting room in that winter night with his luggage removed from the platform ~~mf~~ by the railway guards.

These are certainly some hard tests as well as provocative causes for the spirited ones to become more hardened, strengthened and determined in mind and spirit. Dada Abdullah's attorney in Pretoria, one A.W.Walker, guided Gandhi to the study of the Bible. Gandhi read some other books also but the experience that he had personally had helped him to assess the life and conditions of the compatriots in that country.

When Gandhi was thus busy exploring the situation of Indians in South Africa, in India, Annie Besant too started doing a similar job. She came to India after participating in the Congress of the World Religions at Chicago where she had represented the World Theosophical Society. Her visit to India was not an accident. She had long

felt that India was her home. She had fought for India's cause in England along with Charles Bradlaugh, when she was still young. After her arrival in India, she considered that she was in her own country. She embraced the Hindu religion, worshipped Hindu culture and loved Indian people. After finishing the annual convention of the Theosophical society at Adyar, she left Madras in January 1894 for Calcutta and then to Benares where she opened her home SHANTI KUNJA- the abode of peace! Visiting Agra and Bombay, she left for Europe in March 1894, and in the same year he proceeded to America also for the second time. In all the places of India, that she visited, she delivered a number of speeches exhorting the people to rise up, and people gathered in thousands to listen to her 'beautiful voice and her oratory'.

Gandhi, on the other hand, was no orator nor a writer in those days. Excepting his religious bent of mind, he was like any other man. In his dress, he adopted a compromise between the Indian and English styles. In South Africa he saw that Indians had long been regarded as 'coolies'. The Muslims called themselves as Arabs and Persians as Paarsees but for Indians the term 'coolie' stuck, because a large number of them were indentured labourers who had gone to that country on an agreement to serve there for a certain period of years. With his queer sense of loyalty towards the British, Gandhi, however, wanted to prove that Indians could rise up to the occasion in the hour of crisis and assert themselves and fight injustice. Recollecting his first humiliating experience there, he said, that: 1

> "I refused to go to the other compartment, and the train steamed away. I went and sat in the waiting room---------It was winter---------and the cold was extremely bitter---------I sat and shivered."

Gandhi must have been about twenty-six years old at that time. It is very difficult to understand why he should have been so much adament about it. The basic principle of his own creed and even of the Bible which he had presumed to have read by that time, was to obey the law even if it was discriminatory and repressive. There were other ways to voice his protest at a later stage. It was a fact that he stood for self-suffering, but here that sort of 'suffering' is meaningless, and that amounts only to stubbornness. Annie Besant, it could be said, would not have fought a worthless battle like that. She had known to register her protest more effectively than the young Gandhi who made 'suffering' a badge of his creed.

In India, the old founding fathers of the Indian National Congress, those European nationalists, had already withdrawn from the field, and a few educated Indians took their place. Politics apart, in the spiritual field, there were Swami Vivekananda Swami Ramthirtha and others but then there was still a big void, and it was then Annie Besant came to fill up that void. In one of her speeches during her very first visit to India, she said that: 2.

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1 Gandhi- 'My Experiments with Truth',
2 Annie- The Autobiography- 1939 Ed.

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"India in the past was given by the Supreme the one great duty among the nations of the world, to be the mother of religion, to be the cradle of faith, to send out to all other peoples the truths of the spiritual life. That was the primary duty of India, and all good things were here as long as she filled her DHARMA. As gradually she fell away from the position of the mighty imperial mother of the world's faith, she lost all else that had made her glorious in the past. Her wealth diminished, her independence was gradually undermined, lower and lower she sank, until her people well nigh lost their place among the nations. Other nations have trodden that path before. There were mighty civilizations in the older world, and nothing but their ruins remain today to mark where once they ruled, fought and lived———.

"While nations after nations died and were buried, India- older than the oldest of these- is not dead. Her dust is not yet on the funeral pyre. India still lives, breathing faint and low. India, the ancient mother, the most ancient of all, still stands as Durga stands. Eternity lies behind the goddess, but she remains ever young, for, spirit knows no age, no birth, no dying. And where a nation stands as emblem, of spirituality, she must live———."

When that was the trend of Mrs. Besant's approach to the religious and cultural glory of India, ~~wh~~ about which she freely voiced everywhere, Gandhi was having his apprenticeship. Though a clever lawyer already, he was also a practical worker and agitator. He studied the conditions of Indians in South Africa, but he had to face many problems, and on all such occasions he put religion into practice. He had to fight against many kinds of discrimination in South Africa and as more such cases occurred more determined he became. He scrupulously stuck to truth and tolerance and finally became an embodiment of spirit of service and sacrifice. In the principle of 'service-before-self', Gandhi was second to none in the world. He set up wholeheartedly to ameliorate the lot of the coloured workers who were treated as just coolies.

It was in November 1860, for the first time, Indian workers from Calcutta and Madras, were shipped to Natal. By the year 1880, the number of Indian labourers increased in South Africa, and Natal alone had about 51,000 of them in the year 1890. The provinces of Cape Colony, Transval etc were also filled up with the Indian indentured labourers. In 1885, the Boer Government had declared that those Indians could have no voting power nor acquire citizenship. Such instances of blatant violation of human rights were very many at the higher level, and at the lower level, Gandhi himself was subjected to humiliation and discrimination many a time. He had also the case of one Balachandra, a Tamilian worker from Madras, who was treated very brutally by his white masters.

Gandhi had some vague ideas about the functioning of the Indian National Congress in India and, therefore, on the same lines, he founded the Natal Indian Congress in 1894-95. In December 1895, he issued an 'appeal to Britons in South Africa' to see reason. He addressed letters to the press in Africa and England. Sir William W. Hunter, the historian, was a sympathiser of Gandhi's movement, and he was then writing to 'The Times', London. Within about two or three years, the Natal Indian Congress became a powerful organization. In the meantime, Gandhi read many books on religion,

the Bible, the Gita and those of Ruskin, Tolstoy, Thoreau and Madame Blavatsky. At the same time in India, Annie Besant had made that her spiritual home and would spend six months of every year in Europe. But right from 1893, she earnestly took to revive and revitalise Indian culture, especially the Hindu culture, in which she had found so much. In one of her first series of speeches in India, she announced that: 3.

> "India's salvation depends on herself--------and you, my brothers, are responsible for your own land. Ere long I hope to stand face to face with you; I, to whom India and Indian peoples seem nearer than the nation to which by birth I belong. In heart I am one with you, and to you by my past I belong---------I do not forget my true motherland, and my inner nature turns eastward over the filial longing. When KARMA opens the door I will walk through it, and we will meet in body as we can already meet in mind."

Thus a great soul emerged in India and 'KARMA opened the door' for Annie Besant to walk into this motherland (India) of hers. By this time, from 1893 to 1900, Annie was well-versed in Indian classics, epics, scriptures and SHASTRAs. She translated a good lot of them into English, and her translation of the Bhagavad Gita alone was sold in millions of copies. Of course, in India, she was still in a stage of apprenticeship, and she had not yet taken to active politics. Her activities were then confined only to literary, social and educational fields.

Explaining how the Europeans happened to be the true lovers of Hindu culture, Annie Besant gave a stirring call to Hindus saying that:

> "The Mother (Durga), looking over the land and asking for someone to serve her (India), raised her eyes--------and said, 'Lo, I will take some of my children's souls---------and send them forth to other nations; they shall be born among other peoples---------And, they from many lands, have heard the Mother's call and have come across many oceans to her summoning voice;--------I tell you that the future that lies before you shall be greater than your past has been, mightier in spiritual knowledge, grander in spiritual achievement, more potent in spiritual life, that the very Rishis themselves who are without, standing and waiting, shall again find their home on Indian soil--------."

Annie also added, that:

> "Do not imagine that because you are not learned--------you cannot influence people---------You can because they see your life--------It is not words, it is life that affects people."

Mohandas Gandhi came to India in June 1896 from South Africa, perhaps, to attend to his own work and also to canvass sympathy to his Natal Indian Congress. He spoke in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay. In Madras he spoke with some excitement because in South Africa there were a large number of South Indians, especially Tamilians. He told them the story of Balachandra who was subjected to brutalities by the imperialists. As he travelled from Madras to Calcutta and later to Allahabad, he talked to many people explaining his mission, and with THE PIONEER he discussed the African problems. At Poona he met Gopalakrishna Gokhale and Balgangadhar Tilak for the first time and explained to them the whole thing.

Gandhi spent considerable time in his home state, Rajkot, and then left for South Africa with his family in December 1896 from Calcutta. But on arrival in Durban, he

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3. Annie- The Autobiography- the 1939 Ed.

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had troubles waiting for him there. Durban had become a port of 'forbidden entry'. His ship was anchored there and no one was allowed to get down. In the meantime, Gandhi's speeches made in India and even in the ship attacking the South African Government, had already reached the ears of the authorities there. That certaining increased Gandhi's trouble. When some friends asked him if he would remain nonviolent if assaulted by the crowd on his disembarkation, he replied that, 'God will give me the courage and sense to forgive them'. 4.

After twenty-three days of anchor, the passengers were allowed to get down at the dock in Durban. Gandhi's friends advised him to struggle and then smuggle his family at night, but he thought that Kasturibai and the two kids should go by carriage to the house of Rustumji, a Paarsi friend. He also determined that he would descend the gangway in daylight and walk. When he did so dressed with his sual long shirt, turban etc, he was quickly spotted out, and the crowd yelled, 'Gandhi, Gandhi', and then threw stones, brickbats and rotten eggs at him. They ripped his turban off and punched him, but luckily, Gandhi was rescued from the mob by Mrs. Alexander, wife of the Superintendant of Police. That was the reception given to Gandhi in South Africa when he went there for a second time after a six-month stay in India in I896.

Annie's monumental achievement in India during her first few years' stay, was the founding of the Central Hindu College in I898, which began as Central Hindu School, and also she founded a school for girls there. In Adyar, Madras, she opened schools, and the most important of them was the PANCHAMA (Harijan) School. Most of her time in India was spent on lectures on revival of Hinduism, women's education, National Education, etc etc. She also wrote many pamphlets and booklets for the use of masses. Once an atheist and materialist and then a socialist, she now became a confirmed Hindu, a champion of Hindus and Hinduism. In that way her conversion was a genuine one and ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ spiritually solid. She was a woman of dynamic energy and resourcefulness. In one of her letters, she wrote that: 5.

> "I write in Kashi, Benares, the city of memories, of great sages and great saints, of learned philosophers and famous kings, the city which is the very heart of Hinduism————In that beloved city I am writing, in my old home, SHANTI-KUNJA, at my writing table————."

During those days, Mrs. Besant had kept away from politics. According to her, working in social and educational fields, was the most rewarding and satisfying thing than any other work. She was essentially a philosopher of a rare type, a lady every inch, most practical and ideal in her outlook. Her lecture tour all over the world, especially in India, Europe, North America and Australia, went on almost every year, but her most purposeful work was in India after I893. She would tell her Indian audience, that: 6.

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4. Jeoffry Adhe- 'Gandhi'- Page 7I,
5. Annie- The Autobiography- the I939 Ed.
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"The needs of India are among others, the development of national spirit, and an education founded in Indian ideals and enriched, not dominated, by the thought and culture of the West."

She also said that:

"One of the great difficulties that struck at the ~~mark~~ root of unification was that there had never been a united India in the past. Temporary unions there had been from to time; but never was there one united India, a unified nation extending from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, from Bengal to Kathiawad————The task ~~of~~ before India, therefore, was to make a self-sustaining and self-conscious nationality."

That was what she felt. In India she found that nationalism was lacking, and the conditions were not there to create the national spirit. Therefore, she took to preach the Hindu theosophy and Eastern philosophy through her lectures throughout India. She was a mighty spirit that was always in the move. Her admiring disciples and followers in Europe, America and Australia contributed liberally for her philonthropic work, which resources she used for the causes ~~in~~ she sponsored, especially in the field of education and in reviving the Hindu religion and culture.

Gandhi's work in South Africa continued and he kept the tempo of the movement, and the membership of the Natal Indian Congress rose up and the capital also rose up to £ 4,000. Apart from his professional correspondences, Gandhi used to be busy with many kinds of civic work.

Gandhi, of course, had meant to conquer the world with love. That was all right, but the situation in which he put himself was pitiable and also unreasonable. His later realization to fight for justice, racial ~~discrimination~~ indiscrimination and equality etc borne out by his strong belief in the Biblical principles, because before a mighty Government, one could fight only that way and no other way. As a lawyer of 'coolies' and as an agitator for the rights and liberty of the people, Gandhi was well known in South Africa by the time he was 35.

"Meanwhile insult added to insult and humiliations piled up in that outpost of the Empire. Episode stacked upon episode to form a sort of pyre. There was the incident on the coach from Charlestown where Gandhi was made to sit outside- beaten when he refused to place himself at the coachman's feet, clinging on desperately while blows were aimed at his frail, weak body." 7.

All this seemed to have been due to an yearning to suffer and die as a martyr. Such incidents were all easily avoidable. Governments would be oppressive in order to see that their established law and order, however crude they might be, worked in accordance with the laid up policy. So Gandhi's place should have been at the legislatures or with the legislators and not with the policemen or railway guards. There was no fun in standing before the people of that sort bare-chested to be beaten outright. However, in his later campaigns, Gandhi had avoided such situations and had behaved with tolerance and understanding. With all that, by the way he preferred his agitations to be, he had caused a puzzle and even despair to many an on-looker.

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7. D.F.Karaka- 'Out of Dust'.

Mrs. Annie Besant's tour in India and Europe , almost every year, was a regular feature of her programme. As to her tour in 1900, it was said that during that year she devoted her organizing talents to the building up of educational work and recreation of India's greatness. In the month of March, she moved to SHANTI KUNJA, Benares, her beloved home for years.

"She left India in April and arrived in Italy where she spoke in Naples, Rome, Florence and Vennice and then visited some of the towns in Northern India and began to stress some of the great teachings of Hindu theism--------The whole of this year (1901), she spent in India. She emphasised in her lectures the immense significance of Hinduism, and as she went from town to town, spoke frequently on Hindusim and Theosophy---------Education was always in the fore in her work, and for the sake of it she spent long periods at Benares consolidating the work of the Central Hindu College of which she was 'the life and the soul'. What Col. Henry Olcott did for Buddhism, she now did for Hinduism." 8.

By her many-sided activities and relentless work, Annie had almost become a legendary figure within such a short span of life, when she was just in her fifties. Her oratory shook thousands of audience who listened to her all over the world, and her intellectual eminence and brilliance was second to none. In England there arose a group of people eho even looked at her as a sacrosanct personality, and Annie ~~her~~ heard that too. She promptly turned to them and said, that: 9.

"I am told,what ought to be good authority, that there is a growing tendency in the Theosophical Society in London to consider me as a sacrosanct personality, beyond and above criticism. Frankly I cannot believe that any claim so wild and preposterous is set up, or that many know me so little as to imagine that, if it were set up, I would meet it with anything but the uttermost condemnation. Even a people holding and acting on such a theory would be a danger to the society; if any considerable number had held and acted on it, the Society would perish. Liberty of opinion is the life-breath of the Society; the fullest freedom in criticising opinions is necessary for the preservation of the growth and evaluation of the Society-------."

So that was Annie Besant, and she, a woman, when men alone generally think that they are superior and none else. That, of course, an ancient prejudice. But Annie was powerful enough to stand before any number of men and shatter them into pieces by her gift of the gab and her intellectual eminence. She shook a generation of great men all over who included great thinkers and scholars, by her magnificent spiritual acumen.

A steadfast fighter against any discrimination of any form, Gandhi, in the meantime, was in sympathy with the cause of the Boers when the Boer war broke out in South Africa in 1899 although his loyalty and service was for the British. He saw reason on both sides and then campaigned in accordance with the constitution of the country. His loyalty for the British, despite provocation and humiliation even from the days he was in Rajkot in 1891, was a part of his philosophy. As early as 1893, Gandhi said that: 'India's emancipation must come through the British empire'.

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8. George Arundale's Preface to Annie's Autobiography,
9. Annie- the Autobiography- the 1939 Ed.

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"With these thoughts in mind, the future opponent of the British imperialism supported one of the sordid of imperial wars. He proposed to raise an Indian ambulance corps Most of the English, to whom Indians were untrustworthy poltroons, poured scorn on his plan. Anyway he was serious." 10.

According to one of his biographers, Gandhi, at once offered his services during the Boer War to the Natal Government:

"There were many reasons for this action; he felt a great sense of loyalty to the empire; and he was profoundly convinced that Indians who claimed the right to be regarded as British subjects must accept the responsibility of being so in times of war." 11.

Gandhi helped the British by himself recruiting men for the war and trained those men. He enlisted medical men as well to his corps which consisted of 300 free Indians, 800 indentured labourers and 40 leading men of the rest of the races and creeds. Gandhi's relation with the British troops was cordial and he and his corps were congratulated by the newspapers of the country for their services. When Queen Victoria died, Gandhi laid a wreath on her statue on behalf of his corps and the Indians in South Africa.

Gandhi's attitude to his political activities were influenced by the thoughts of the earlier thinkers. He translated the teachings of Christ and others into practice. He demonstrated that it was possible to fight for liberty without resorting to violence. He made the French and Russian revolutions look somewhat pointless in spite of the liberty that brought to their people. 'SATYAGRAHA, here means, SATYA- truth, AGRAHA- the insistent pursuit or flaming desire for Truth'. 12.

With all that some of his earlier observations and decisions were immature that bordered on inconsistency. Born to an orthodox family, Gandho broke that orthodoxy by going abroad for acquiring western education against which he stood later on. He broke even his tie of 'native' nationalism by being disgusted of the British bureaucracy in India and, therefore, he thought it better to leave the country when he got the South African job. Though an idealist, all his philosophical knowledge was acquired mostly from the Western scurces. According to him, SATYAGRAHA was 'conscious and deliberate suffering brought upon oneself of one's own will and accord'.

On the other hand, Annie Besant was down to earth a realist. She was not a dreamer although, as a theosophist, she believed too much in mysticism and occultism. That apart, her method of fighting for the rights, justice and truth were more realistic than of others. Because of her being a woman, a white woman in a country of brown people, Annie had to suffer suspicion, colour and even racial discrimination in India, and that was how a few of the Indian nationalists looked at her. Moreover, as one belonging to the people of the ruling class and also a woman, she had to suffer from man's prejudices in general although a few men might have been flattering her. Had she born in India as an Indian woman, she would have been a goddess in every home of India including Pakistan which would never have been carved if she had been heard and

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10. Jeoffry Ashe- on Gandhi, Page 73,
11. Robert Payne- on Gandhi- Page 119,
12. D.F.Karaka- 'Out of Dust'.

and followed by the rest of the people, but the Indians had not yet come to a stage of understanding or assessing things objectively.

Mrs. Besant, the theosophist, succeeded her Guru Madame Blavatsky, as 'World Mother and world President of the network of Theosophical Lodges all over. The founder-President, Col. Henry Olcott, was there till 1907 but it was Annie who was the moving spirit in the world of Theosophy. She went round the globe many a time, almost every year, in those days when travelling was very irksome and tiresome job. Long before she was in India, she had already been an unofficial ambassador of India, and she talked much about the Indian philosophy. Annie was an ardent believer in the KARMA theory, the philosophy of Yoga, the Sankhya and of the transmigration of soul. She was the first Western philosopher who talked about these subjects in the far off lands.

As far as Gandhi was concerned, he was always guided by his inner conscience. He said many a time that Gopalakrishna Gokhale was his GURU, but these GURU and SISHYA had never understood each other except that they admired each other for their high moral qualities. To add to that one has to see how far Gokhale took Gandhi as his disciple although the Guru in Gokhale had been in South Africa where he saw Gandhi in action from close quarters, and rightly prophesied that Gandhi was no ordinary person. Even then there is no evidence to say if Gokhale had agreed to Gandhian politics and programmes.

As the Boer War ended, Gandhi thought that it was time for him to get back to India winding up all his political and business establishments. His idea was to practice at Bombay and then enter into Indian politics. But the Natal Indian Congressmen would not let him go. They told him to get back after visiting India. Anyway with some reluctance, Gandhi left for India on the 18th November 1901. He was present at the Calcutta Congress session presided over by Dinshaw Wacha in December that year. From Bombay he travelled by train with the president-designate and his predecessor, Sir Phirozshah Mehta who had succeeded to the honour of the Congress presidency enjoyed by the veteran Dadabhai Naoroji.

At this Congress session in Calcutta, Gandhi was keen on moving his resolution on South African affairs. Amongst the delegates there were men like Allan O.Hume, Yule, Cotton, Smith, Wedderburn and a few other Europeans. Among the Indians there were the stalwart figure of Naoroji, the trumpet voice of Surendranath Benerjie, the thundering Bepinchandra Pal, the tall and elegant Phirozshah Mehta, the sobre Dinshaw Wacha, the hon'ble Hassan Badruddin Tyabji, the extremist Tilak, the orthodox Malaviya, the young moderate Gokhale, the turbanned Vijayaraghavacharya, the ebullient Lajpat Rai and several others. Amidst them Mohandas Gandhi was a young man of 31. He was given five minutes to move his resolution. The unassuming Gandhi was up on the platform with a Paarsee coat and trousers. He talked for some time and there was usual cheers, and in a big crowd no one could say why after all the people applaud and shout cheers.

In those days, Gandhi was not known to many of his countrymen, and was not recognised

even by those who had known him to some extent. Instead of doing some showy business to show himself as a prominent man, Gandhi would keep himself busy in cleaning lavatories, sweeping the dining rooms, attending to the sanitation work, treating the injured in the crowd and seeing that no caste segregation took place in a national gathering of that kind. This kind of activities of a young man caused some justified commotion among the people who had known or seen him.

Gandhi lived with Gokhale for about a month in Calcutta. He visited the Brahma Samaja headquarters and later attended a few Bengalee music concerts which he enjoyed immensely. He called on Swami Vivekananda but unfortunately the latter was sick at that time and he could not see him. He went to the Kali temple 'and was revolted by the blood of the sacrificed ship'.

Gandhi left Calcutta back to Rajkot. He broke his journey at Benares. "I planned to go first to Benares to pay my respects to Mrs. Besant who was then ill", said Gandhi. As he reached her house and sent his name in, Mrs. Besant immediately came out but Gandhi did not want to trouble her. He simply told her the object of his visit and then politely left the place.

After he reached Rajkot, he settled down there to practice law 'but without confidence. The memory of the past failures, it was said, oppressed him. The man who spoke so boldly in Durban was tongue-tied at home- in India. Later Gopalakrishna Gokhale encouraged him to move from Rajkot to Bombay.' I3.

While he was in Bombay, an American Insurance Agent went to his chambers and told him to insure for Rs. IO,000 which his family would get at his death. After finding the bargain reasonable, Gandhi agreed, and for some months he continued to pay the premiums. 'Later he became angry with himself for having fallen into the trap laid by the Insurance agent, and he let the policy lapse.' After a couple of years, Gandhi argued that by insuring his life, he had robbed his wife and children of their self-reliance. It was also said that he made his policy lapse due to the reason that he was not able to pay the premium regularly.

Gandhi was in Bombay for only five months. As the Natal Indians had cautioned him when he had left for India, a telegram came to him from Durban, which asked 'Barrister Gandhi--------to fulfil promise'. Therefore, in order to fulfil his earlier promise, Gandhi started packing back to South Africa after staying in India for exactly one year. In November I902, he sailed leaving his family at Santa Cruz. He took with him Maganlal Gandhi, a cousin of his. Now Gandhi had four children, all boys- Harilal (I888- I948), Manilal (I892- I956), Ramadas (I897- I969) and Devadas (I900- I957).

Among the many admirers and followers of Mrs. Annie Besant in North India, Dr. Bhagavan Das and his son Sri Prakasa, stand out prominent. They knew her very intimately and for a long time and, in fact, Dr. Bhagavan Das, Motilal Nehru and a few other old educated people of the last century had become staunch theosophists. When Jawaharlal

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I3. Robert Payne- on Gandhi, Page I36.

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Nehru was a boy of eleven years, Mrs. Besant found a Theosophist teacher, Ferdinand Brooks, for him. Nehru said that: I4.

> "Mrs. Besant visited Allahabad in those days————My father was an old Theosophist having joined the Society in its early days when Madame Blavatsky was in India————So I became a member of the Theosophical Society at I3, and Mrs. Besant herself performed the ceremony of initiation, which consisted of good advice and instruction in some mysterious signs, probably a relic of freemasonry."

Jawaharlal also added that: I5.

> "I was deeply moved by her oratory and returned from her speeches dazed and in a sort of dream. I decided to join the Theosophical Society————As I left for England soon after my initiation in Theosppby, I lost touch with it————But for Mrs. Besant, I always had the warmest admiration."

Annie knew what she was doing. She always spoke with sincerity and with emotion. She was inspired by the Hindu culture and from the Hindu SAMSKARA which was inherent in her. Her efforts to revive the country's finest traditions went on at a tremendous speed as years passed on, and she was 'drawing into the work of India's regeneration the finest Indians in many walks of life, and winning at the same time Government's approbation for the titanic task she had undertaken. She visited about thirty towns in I90I alone in the North, West and East of India and stirred people into action, especially in the field of education.' ~~I6x~~ Once she said, that: I6.

> "The older members of the society while continuing along the paths which suit them best, should not look coldly or disapprovingly on the new paths planned out by the younger ones————They should give a free hand to their juniors and do nothing to discourage new ventures————The future is with the younger members, and their initiative and eagerness are valuable factors in the work. The younger members on their side, should remember that had it not been for the labours of the elder ones, carried on through times more difficult than the present, they would not be standing where they are today, and their enthusiasm should not be soiled with ingratitude."

In India, Mrs. Besant "gained enormous popularity by her constantly proclaimed faith in the superiority of the Hindu system to the vaunted civilization of the West. Hindus were welcommed to the Theosophical fold without being required to renounce their ancient faiths. Indeed, Mrs. Besant told them that their gods, their philosophy, their morality were all on a higher plane of thought than the West had ever reached." I7.

Annie thus became a great Hindu religious missionary during the first twenty years of her career in India. Apart from her translation of the GITA and other Hindu scriptures which went into several editions, her book 'The Religious Problem of India', first came out in I902. Her annual convention on Education and of the Theosophical Society were drawing crowds to Adyar, and the minimum number of people attending, the MADRASMAIL estimated at 2,500 or more.

> "The great banyan tree was the Hall, and its far-stretching branches the roof; the down-reaching roots, struck into the ground, were the pillars, while the red sky dyed by the setting sun gleamed rosily through the green leaves, and was like the coloured windows." I8.

I4. Dorothy Norman on Nehru- Vol. I.
I5. " " & Autobiography of Nehru,
I6. George Arundale & Annie's Autobiography,
I7. Annie- The Autobiography- the I939 Ed.
I8. George Arundale's Preface to Annie's book.

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After his return to South Africa in the end of the year I902, Mohandas Gandhi became a sort of custodian of the interests of the Indians and other coloured workers there. When he had left India for the first time ten years prior to that in I893, people had taken him to have been a failure as a lawyer, but that was not true. With the years of experience, he had become an outstanding legal luminary. That did not mean that Mohandas was a defender of cheaters, criminals, bandits and murderers. No, he had in fact a philosophy of his own. If at least ten per cent of the lawyers of today followed Gandhi's advice and acted accordingly, the world would be much nobler than it is now. Gandhi's philosophy of law was simple, straight and honest.

It is said that Gandhi 'discovered a good deal about law'. From the beginning he had refused to take any case the justice of which he doubted. He learned that if he were sure of facts, the law was apt to take care of itself. 'Facts mean truth, and once we adhere to truth the law comes to our aid naturally', he said. He also saw that the winning party seldom recovered all his costs and that compromise was an excellect technic.

> "The true function of a lawyer is to unite parties riven asunder. A large part of my time during the twenty years of my practice was occupied in bringing about private compromises." I9.

During the first forty-five years of his life, Mohandas Gandhi 'experimented with Truth' in many ways and in many fields. In his day-to-day habits, prayers, diet, celibacy, physical exercises, morning walks, private affairs, private transactions, social, political and legal matters, Gandhi seemed to have been a perfect YOGI in action. He had full control over his mind and actions. He could sleep whenever he wanted, eat as little as he could or remain without eating and so on. One of his biographers wrote that: 20.

> "Gandhi had tact, charm, consideration but can be brutal for a principle------- The things he liked most were children, fresh air, laughter, friends, the truth. What he disliked most was a lie.---------He had many political tussles and tumbles. He was absolutely inflexible on any matter or principle, and wonderfully supple on minor details."

The Boer War of I899-I900, and the Zulu rebellion of I906, brought to Gandhi's mind the horrors of war. That made him think of something which went beyond earthly desire which would create and not destroy. It occurred to him that the force which he was trying to acquire, would only come to him when he practised continence and observed chastity. He was about 37 years old then, and he took to BRAHMACHARYA or celibacy very seriously. That implied self-denial in its most drastic form. He also knew the seriousness of his vow of celibacy and he realised that this double purification of body and mind was an essential preliminary to the SATYAGRAHA for which he was preparing. He started this exercise with his diet control, took only essentials, denied salt and sometimes even milk. The average man thought that there was something mad about the way in which Gandhi lived.

I9. John Gunther- 'Inside Asia'- Page 35I.
20. " " " "

As to Annie Besant, she was already a world renowned KARMA YOGINI even while she was in her forties. She was a woman of entirely a different mould. She found herself a misfit as a family woman; she could not compromise to a system of matrimonial life. She bore two children and then got herself separated but then as all the relevant testimonies speak, she was pure both in body and mind. She did not however demonstrate the sincerity of her character. Her sex, her charm, her grace, her oratory and her organising capacity always shone brilliantly before which the cynics collapsed then and there. She was a courageous woman of outstanding character and capacity.

> "In spite of the succession of men in her life and her emotional attachment to each, Annie had never entered into physical relations with any of them but her husband. This testimonial of chastity in spite of the scandalous stories spread about her in England in 1870s and 1880s, was upheld by everyone with whom I spoke". 21.

Thus said Annie's very objective biographer Prof. Nethercot in his latest work. Annie went round the world very frequently and poured out millions of words all over in the form of speeches and through her prolific writings, and all that she did in purely a missionary spirit. No doubt, she had opponents everywhere, and opposition for her views and ideals became more relishing for her. That encouraged her to do more and more and speak out all her philosophy and theosophy.

Being also an occultist, Annie believed in so many things pertaining to occultism. When she landed in India for the first time in 1893, she thought that it was her another birth. Born as a Christian, turned an atheist, freethinker, a Fabian and so on, she had gone through many lives. In the words of her biographer, Annie 'had left Mother Church, sought understanding in latitudinarianism and scepticism, scoffed at Judaism and Christianity and then followed the new science. She had found her new faith among the mystics such as the non-Platonists, the Pythogoreans and the Theosophists. She had undergone the examinations and tortures of her own variety of Inquisition. She was sure she had been burned at the stake in Rome in 1600 A.D. She knew she had once been Giordano Bruno.'

> "And she knew that everything, no matter how small, that had happened to her in her six-hundred odd lives since she had individualised on the Moon Chain about 600,000 B.C. had been part of her KARMA———." 22.

She was in India, the land that she believed as of her previous birth or births. So the next forty years of her eventful life in India was evidently an important part of the political, social, and educational history of India. None of these aspects would go without a reference to Mrs. Besant's role in India from 1893 to 1933.

When Mohandas Gandhi lived a life of an ascetic, the world scoffed at him, and for Annie also the world was equally unkind. But she was more gallant in that because as a young woman she had faced the wretched world like a lioness and came out as an outstanding heroine. She too had always been experimenting with religion and with the idea of GOD. It was as an atheist she was more religious. Her freethinking,

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21. The HINDU, Madras, 21st Sept.1933 & Prof. Nethercot- Page 465.
22. Prof. Nethercot on Annie- Page 209-210.

fabianism and socialism gave her further insight into the practical religion and. like Madame Blavatsky, she saw more of God in Hindusim and that she was able to find through theosophy.

Therefore, one could see how high Annie was in the estimation of the people and how true was she to herself. Apart from her associates, colleagues and admirers, one other man who had known her qualities of head and heart, was her great contemporary, Gandhi himself who had adored her even from far away Africa and while they were oceans apart.

In South Africa, Gandhi's 'Beach Grove Villa' residence became the headquarters of the Natal Indian Congress, and there he was an active advocate of the poor, and of Truth. His law office in Johannasburg was always crowded with clients, his followers, agitators, complainants and others. For them Gandhi alone was relief and their salvation. In his modest law office he had four photographs prominently placed. One was of Jesus Christ, the second one was of Justice Ranade, and the third one was of Annie Besant. The other photograph was of Sir William Hunter, the historian and author of the Imperial gazetteers, who had also upheld the rights of the Indians in South Africa through his writings in THE TIMES, London, concerning the situation of the coloured people in that country.

In the very first year of Annie's coming to India, she delivered hundreds of lectures from Tuticorin to Calcutta, and all the Indian newspapers of those days, mostly of Madras, Calcutta, Allahabad and Bombay agreed that she 'held her audience spell-bound'. Wherever she went, people gathered in thousands, and her meetings, especially in Bangalore, Calcutta and Benares and other cities were unprecedented in their strength, enthusiasm, dignity and decorum.

She was known among the Indians as BARI MEM SAHIB or 'the big European lady'. Till I893, no one in India had held the masses as she did during her lectures on Hindu religion and other allied subjects. In that way Madame Annie's presence was like a gentle # rain to a scorched desert. One might say that there were Swami Dayanand, Vivekanand, Shradhanand and others but they came to prominence only amongst a select group of their own people in their own regions in the I880s nor did they go about in India as many times as Annie did after she came to India in I893. Unfortunately Swami Vivekananda did not say how many times he heard Annie speaking in Calcutta from I893 till his death nine years later, nor did he say who gave him the idea of the Parliament of Religions that held in Chicago in I893, where Annie Besant too spoke and poured ~~fourth~~ her usual oratory and about which incident little was said by the ungrateful Indians? But the actual truth was that Annie was one of the great religious reformers who revived Hinduism from its roots. To her Calcutta audience, she gave a clarion call during one of her speeches, that: 23.

"If the youth of India would act up to the traditions of their past instead of fawning on a foreign power, they would not long remain under a foreign yoke."

It was all the more heartening when an English woman gave such reactionary appeal in those days. The then chief of the International Theosophical Society, Col. Henry

23. Prof. Nethercot on Annie Besant.

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Henry Olcott, was also with her in the platform at the above-said meeting when her speech was both stirring and moving, and the Colonel, it was said, 'at times wept copiously' as he had presided over the function. During her first four months in India she had give I2I set lectures to audiences varying from 600 to 6,000.

This was a great innovation of a movement. Mrs. Besant had no politics in her mind at that time. Hers was purely a social, religious and educational movement. Her mission was to go to the core of India and regenerate a depressed and fallen race. She did the same work with considerable success in England, and now she was in India:

"The Indian section of the Theosophical Society announced that for the first time Indian ladies would attend the coming convention, that a part of the hall would be reserved for them and that in addition to Mrs. Besant, 'the renowned woman-suffragist' would attend. Even in caste-bound India, traditions were already beginning to crumble at the approach of Annie Besant." 24.

Annie was like a proverbial grandmother with a down-right belief in DHARMA, and with an absolute confidence in her KARMA and her message to the world. Just a year before she left for India, she addressed a note to the people of India, in I892, that: 25.

"India's salvation depends on herself--------and you, my brothers, are responsible to your own land. Ere long I hope to stand face to face with you, I to whom India and the Indian peoples seem nearer than the nation to which by birth I belong. Born last time under Western skies for work that needs to be done, I do not forget my true motherland and my inner nature turns eastward ever with filial longing. When KARMA opens the door I will walk through it and we will meet// in body as we can already meet in mind. Farewell."

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24. Prof. Nethercot on Annie Besant- pages I7 to 20,
25. Annie- The Autobiography- the I939 Ed.

CHAPTER IV.

OCCULTISTS & ASCETICS IN COURTS OF LAW.

"Dr. Annie Besant, a powerful writer, a superb orator, a born organiser- she made the bones in the Indian political valley instinct with life and planted the national banner on the mountain tops. She roused the national consciousness of Indians by her religious gospel and political crusade. While swinging in cradle in her seven, she recited Milton's PARADISE LOST————."

So go on the lines of grand epithet concerning this rare woman who came to India with her melodious voice and wonderful oratory. Indian women of her generation and onwards should be grateful to her who came as a hurricane to afford the country a new twentieth century spirit. Her one pet theme was INDIA'S MISSION TO THE WORLD, and this popular subject created a very popular feeling. In about two or three years after her coming to India, she covered the whole of India with a lightening speed touring scores of Indian cities. "During the whole of her lecturing tour in India, she swore, she had in no way meddled with political affairs', but in fact, it seemed that she had already done just that and the Government was greatly alarmed.

The Indian mentality at that time, as it might be so even now, was so crude that while Annie was in Calcutta, 'there was a rumour that there might be a riot because a few Indians then took seriously her profession of Hinduism, and many were especially hostile when they heard that a woman of pretended Hindu faith intended to appear unveiled in public to address a great company of men.' 1

That was the reaction all over India eighty-five years back when a woman, an European woman, went all over India where women were kept beyond PURDAH, and where women had not at all known till then for their emancipation. Mrs. Besant strode India like a colossus and that gave for the Indian women and for the first time in the Indian history, a great invigorating influence. People looked upon her with awe and they gathered wherever she went. It was said that: 2.

"When Mrs. Besant started to expound Hinduism more eloquently than the reporter (of an English newspaper) had ever heard anyone expound Christianity, the chill melted and the audience was thrilled and enraptured."

As already said, Mohandas Gandhi was back in South Africa in November 1902 after spending four months in Rajkot and five months in Bombay. He had felt that conditions in India had choked him enough with disgust and for which he blamed the British and then left to another British colony. That's where Gandhi becomes an intriguing person. Leaving India to her lot, Gandhi launched his campaign against white atrocities in South Africa. In India, as already said, he could not make both ends meet as a lawyer, whereas in South Africa, as a lawyer of 'coolies' he could develop both his economic and political activities together. He started a newspaper in Durban at the instance of a Gujarati printer and called it INDIAN OPINION. The first edition of the paper in Gujarati came out in six columns on the 4th June 1903.

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1. Annie- by Prof. Nethercot-
2. " - by Frank Morton, quoted by Nethercot.

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It is not clear as to how many letters were passed on between Annie and Gandhi. From Johannesburg, Gandhi wrote a letter to Mrs. Besant, to her Central Hindu College address, Benares City, dated the 13th May 1905, on the subject of reprinting her English version of Bhagvad Gita. Gandhi wrote that: 3.

'Dear Madam, The Manager of the International Printing Press, has sent me your letter to them regarding the reprint of the Bhagavad Gita. The responsibility for the advice, as to the reprint and inclusion of the portrait, must rest entirely on my shoulders--------A gentleman offered to have a translation of the Gita printed for distribution among Hindu boys and others if the Managers (of the press) printed it at cost price---------The matter was referred to me and, after much thought, as there was no time left for reference to you, I advised that your translation might be reprinted for circulation in South Africa-------.

"Your letter of the 27th March (1905), however, explains the absence of any communication from you. As to the portrait, I can only say that, if a mistake has been committed, it has arisen from excessive reverence for yourself. When I suggested the inclusion of the portrait, I had in my mind the interpretation that was likely to be placed upon the act by some people, but I again felt that you would not resent the indiscretion, if such it was, when you come to know that a large number of copies went to the Indian youths-------I have now placed the whole position before you-----If you consider that any public statement is necessary, or complete withdrawal of the book from the circulation, or simply taking out the portrait is necessary, your wishes will be carried out, I remain-------. Sd.) M.K.G."

Gandhi had referred to this letter in his correspondence with one Chaganlal Gandhi. He wrote most of his letters and articles in the INDIAN OPINION, his journal in Gujarati language. In a letter of the 11th July 1907, he also referred to Mrs. Besant's letter and the Bhagavad Gita that was already reprinted and published. 4.

From 1906, for the next four or five years, Gandhi had a hectic time in South Africa. The Zulu rebellion of April 1906, was one of the reasons for the same. This was different from the Boer War when the Dutch and the British fought. The Zulu revolt was the rising of the natives and even during this rebellion Gandhi felt that he should support the British Government. At a meeting held by the Natal Indian Congress in Durban, with its President Dawad ~~Mam~~ Muhammad presiding over, on the 24th April 1906, a resolution was moved by Bernard Gabriel, an advocate, said that: 5.

"This meeting of the British Indians assembled under the auspices of the Natal Indian Congress, hereby authorise the Chairman to send an offer to the Government in connection with the native rising, of the same nature as during the Boer War."

This resolution was seconded by Ismail Cora of the firm of M/S. B.Ebrahim Ismail & Co, Omar Haji Amod Zaveri of the Chamber of Commerce, who used to preside over Gandhi's political meetings, Abdul Rahman and Haaji Habib were some of the prominent Muslims there. Anyway as a result of this decision and at the instance of the Natal Government, an Indian Stretcher Bearer Corps was formed as an experimental measure, to operate against the Zulus. The Corps consisted of twenty Indians among whom six were Muslims with Gandhi as Sergeant-Major. In a photograph taken at that time, Gandhi is seen with full uniform

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3. Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi- Vol. 4, Page 429,
4. " " " " " 4 " 433,
5. " " " " Vol.7 & 5, Pages 96 & 291 respectively.

sitting in the centre of the group. This corps was disbanded on the 19th July 1906, after a six-week operation which was very intensive with marching through jungles and such other heavy odds. At a party arranged in honour of this Corps, Gandhi said that: 6.

"--------What the Corps had done was only its duty. If the Indians really wanted to show their appreciation of the world of the Corps, they should try through the Government to have a permanent Corps set up, and should also exert themselves to improve their physique in order to qualify for admission."

Gandhi also strongly recommended for the formation of such a corps. In an article in his INDIAN OPINION of the ~~8th~~ 9th February 1907, he wrote with reference to a pamphlet of Mrs. Annie Besant, stating that: 7.

"Mrs. Besant has written an article for the December issue of INDIAN OPINION on 'Nation building' which deserves to be read carefully by all. All the communities in India are now bent on making India a single nation and improving her condition". Proceeding, Gandhi said that:

"Motivated by this urge, well known people in the country have put forward their ideas on the subject. Mrs. President is the President of the Theosophical Society and spends six months in India each year and the other six months in England. She enjoys the reputation of being one of the world's great orators and most of her writings too, are very instructive--------."

After Col. Henry S.Olcott's death, Annie Besant became the International President of the Theosophical Society, and from then on the Organization flourished with increased strength and vigour. The membership of the society world-over, was 14,800 in 1917 and it rose up to 21,000 in 1910 and to 40,000 in 1920. Annie was always in the move. Apart from her yearly trips to her home in England, and sometimes to Australia and New Zealand, Annie had covered North America too in 1893, 1897, 1907, 1909, 1926 and 1929. This was a great record for a woman of her age in those days, and the sole purpose of her inter-continental travels was to work for Theosophical Societies all over and to propagate Indian philosophy and culture. In her later years she was also an effective voice of India for the freedom of that country.

In the first decade of this century, Gandhi was deeply immersed in his work on the alleviation of the conditions of the Asian labourers in South Africa. His 'early struggle at the Phoenix Farm provides a fascinating study for anyone who wishes to follow the ascetic strain in Gandhi. It was a sort of back-to-God and back-to-nature idea that found expression in a ~~book~~ back-to-the-soil movement.' Once when the machine stopped working at his Phoenix Farm, his gallant band of workers struggled to outbeat the machine and all the carpenters and craftsmen were active all the time. That was what was taught in Gandhi's farm. As men worked ceaselessly, the machine started reeling almost at dawn as if by miracle. Gandhi was pleased to see that and, he thought that his men's night-long work was rewarded by God. Such things that he had experienced

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6. Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. 5 Page 373,
7. " " " " Vol. 6 " 301,

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there, were said to have been his experiments with truth. He also saw with that "a vision of the future, when his courage and his power of leadership would be more severely tested." 8.

A new test was offered to Gandhi now and that was the Transval Government released an order that there would be compulsory registration of the names and other identification of Indians and the indentured labourers in South Africa. In order to protest this ordinance, Gandhi took the lead and brought the SATYAGRAHA oath into existence. He had the support of the entire mass of workers. The Muslims swore that they would never submit to such ordinance.

The Hamidiya Islamic Society took an active part in this agitation. Its President Abdhul Ghani said: "We shall go to gaol, but will not register ourselves again". The people shouted in one voice protesting against the Act, which they called a BLACK ACT. Another man, Nanalal Shah said at the meeting of the Islamic Society, that: "We have met today for serious business. Mr. Duncan has said that the new law is necessary because the registration certificates already used are such as can be sold. He tells us that they are faked, and that he will give fresh ones in exchange." 9.

Producing his own certificate, Nanalal Shah said that: "It bears even my thumb impression. Is all this not enough? How can anyone else use this register? Does the Government want now to brand us on our foreheads? I will never return my registration certificate. Neither will I be registered again. I prefer going to gaol and I will go there———." IO.

When Hajee Habib rose to speak, the audience greeted him with loud cheers. He said, that: II.

> "There is no disgrace in going to gaol, rather it is an honour. Only a few people knew of Mr. Tilak before he went to gaol; today the whole world knows him. We are not going to get justice at the hands of the British Government———Take the case of Turkey. The British do not hesitate to bullet Turkey, and that not in order to secure the interests of their own subjects. They are always ready to appease the Christian people. In this country, the doors are open to the Whites and Christians even if they be foreign nationals———The bill is most objectionable. If it is passed, I solemnly declare that I will never get myself registered again and will be the first to go to gaol (applause). I recommend the same course to you all. Are you prepared to take the oath?"

Hajee Ojar Ali stood up and said:

> "I am the father of eleven children, but I am prepared to take up the responsibility———I too shall refuse to register myself and prefer to go to gaol and deem it an honour. The Government have betrayed us———The Bill originally envisaged registration of women also, but owing to the efforts of Hamidiya Society, that provision was dropped".

Omaraji Saheb, Imam Abdul Khadir, Tar Muhammad Tayob and others also talked in favour of the resolution. The Hamidiya Islamic Society had addressed a very important letter to the Muslim individuals and organizations in India for support. The Indians in

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8. D.F,Karaka- 'Out of Dust',
9. Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi- Vol.5 Page 439,
10. " " " " Vol.5 " 442,
11. " " " " Vol.5 " 443.

South Africa are 'at present engaged in such a serious struggle that they need help from every nook and corner of India------'. I2.

Here, however, is another intriguing fact about Gandhi that most of his supporters including those persons who first hired him from India to go to South Africa, all seem to have been Muslims although Hindus had out-numbered them by many thousands. That leaves the student of Gandhian history to conclude that Gandhi nurtured a soft-corner for Muslims from his South-African days and which politics of corroboration with Muslims he continued to play even after he came to India, the affect of which was harmful to both himself as well as the country.

George Godfrey and his brother William, joined the agitation and George wrote in the LONDON TIMES of the 15th November 1906, that:

> "The petition misrepresents Mr. Gandhi as a political agitator. We have had the pleasure of being associated with him and the Indians for at least fifteen years, and from this intimate knowledge of things, we can take the responsibility of saying that his is purely a labour of love and not a means to selfish end."

What exactly the case was that most of the Indians had obtained the stay permits from the previous Dutch Government of South Africa, and long before the Boer War, and, now the British Government wanted to replace those permits by the fresh ones. Those permit holders included Hindus, Muslims, Paarsees, a few Chinese and Sinhalese. Gandhi was busy preparing his men for a SATYAGRAHA struggle to face the 'Black Act', and he was busy writing a series of articles in his INDIAN OPINION. Once on the 14th September 1907, he wrote that: I3.

> "Everywhere the Indian is in a sad plight. Now comes a report from America that Indian labourers in Washington were belaboured by cowardly whites and that four of them were wounded-------According to Mrs. Besant, all Indians, high and low, should learn wrestling and other physical exercises to train all parts of body. All this will be possible only if we feel the urge of self-respect and cultivate a sense of manliness--------."

Annie's life in India was, nevertheless, not very smooth-going. She had troubles due to her over-zealous activities, particularly in the field of Indian culture and education. The troubles were engineered by the Hindu religious bigots, and some newspaper men were also behind those fanatics. Evidently they did not relish an European lady in the Hindu costume going about speaking not only in India but all over the world on Hindu religion and philosophy to shame the best of the Hindus, particularly those arrogant Brahmins.

Everything said and done, the Hindu society had its own defects which no one need conceal. It was against such obnoxious and superstitious defects the great European and Indian social reformers beginning from Sir William Carey, Raja Rammohan Roy down to Mrs. Annie Besant had struggled. Those great Indologists included Sir William Jones,

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I2. Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi- Vol. 5 & 7,
I3. " " " " Vol. 6 & 7.

Henry Colebrooke, William Hunter and Sir Fredrick Maxmueller. Mrs. Besant was perhaps the last of the great Western social reformers and Hindu revivalists in India. All these reformers had to suffer at the hands of the Hindu religious bigots,. No Brahmin would teach them any of the scriptures while most of those European scholars helped themselves to master Hindu literature and theology. Annie Besant too was not treated kindly but the reports are there to show that she cared a hoot for those blind superstitious hordes. She very well knew that she too was a victim of race, religion, colour and even sex, but despite those Hindu extremists, she went ahead undaunted. As Gandhi was fighting in South Africa, Annie fought in India, but there Gandhi fought against the Government while Annie fought on a social level for reforming the social and religious outlook of the people. Sri Prakasam, son of Dr. Bhagwan Das, said that: I4.

> "Annie Besant did not seem to have realised that to most devout Hindus, no matter how much they might like to hear her speak or read what she wrote, she was no different from any ordinary untouchable in the caste sense."

In India Annie had to fight against such odd characters and practises. For her Benares in the North and Adyar in Madras in the South, were the two eyes and there she stayed alternatively. She worked ceaselessly and gathered opponents around her in both the places and most of those opponents were Brahmins. India was very dear to her, she said, and added that: I5.

> "Benares was my first Indian home and it remains very dear to my heart, with many a glad and sacred memory, through which runs the golden thread of spiritual aspiration and spiritual life. And Benares is to become a University town for the Hindu University is to rear its stately head there."

Annie had been a 'court bird' even from her early days. In England, both in her private and public life, she appeared in the courts many a time, argued her cases herself and won the applause of the judges, professional advocates and people inside and outside the courts. In India such a thing didn't arise for her till about I908 when serious charges were brought against Bishop Leadbeater, stating that he was demoralising the minds of two young boys, Krishnamurthy and Nityananda, who were under his charge. Instead of educating those boys, people said, he was perverting their minds with his mysticism and occultism. There was some truth in the charge but, on the whole, it was an exaggerated charge also. The Hindus of Benares and Madras instigated the father of the boys, one Naranayya, an obscure Brahmin in Madras civil service, to demand the withdrawal of the boys from Leadbeater's hands. Mrs. Besant, however, strongly defended Leadbeater and said that the whole charge was a hoax. But then the crisis came to the extent of withdrawing the boys from the hands of Leadbeater. As a result, Mrs. Besant became unpopular for some time and also lost a good many of her followers. "Her support to Leadbeater in the unpleasant controversy of which he was the origin weakened her authority and caused many seccessions from the original cult." I6.

I4. Vincent Sheen- on Nehru, Page I9.
I5. ~~The Times, London, the 21st September 1933.~~ Annie- the Autobiography, I939 Ed.
I6. The Times, London, the 21st September I933.

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At the other end, and across the seas in South Africa, Gandhi's persistent struggle that began in 1906 against the Asiatic Registration Bill or BLACK ACT, went on. As already said, he had solid support of all the immigrants. To begin with, Gandhi took this matter to Lord Elgin, then at the Colonial office. Elgin saw that the Act did not stand, but the Transval Government were insistent, and they were sure of bringing the Ordinance into effect soon. Gen. Jan Smuts' Government had offered to repeal the Asiatic Registration Act of 1907, but on certain conditions. That, however, did not satisfy the people.

Therefore, Gandhi prepared for a SATYAGRAHA movement from the 1st July 1907. Picketing began outside the permit offices, and gradually the movement became effective. So the Natal Government made a symbolic arrest of an insignificant individual, Ram Sundar Pandit. After a few days, on the 13th December 1907, the Government released him. This release made the people think that the Government had come to its sense, and they even made the released man a martyr. Speaking at the Hamidiya Islamic Society on the 22nd December 1907, Gandhi said, that: 17.

> "We should not be overjoyed at this victory. At the time of the Boer War the Dutch at first pretended to withdraw and then attacked the British. In the same way the Government may perhaps pretend to have been defeated and may strike later. Therefore, we should only think that our struggle has just started. If they withhold the licences we must carry on trade without them, and on being arrested, should go to gaol rather than pay fine————."

So under such conditions, the civil disobedience movement continued and several people were arrested and convicted and many were ordered to leave Transval. Even those orders were also defied by the people, and then they intensified the agitation. Gandhi was arrested for the first time for two months on the 14th October 1908, and that was his first experience in prison which he had so often courted during his later political campaigns.

This first prison experience of Gandhi happened to be a very disappointing one. He was put in a cell where the condemned criminals for their heinous crimes were put. But he had to bear it with patience because capacity to suffer was the true creed of SATYAGRAHA. Gen. Jan Smuts was expecting that Gandhi would surrender or confess his anti-Government activities but that was a remote wish. The people's movement was intensified even after Gandhi's release. So the Government found a need to arrest Gandhi for another three months from the 25th February 1909. When he was released in May that year, he said that he 'preferred life in prison to life outside with its humiliating denial of elementary rights."

Gandhi, in the meantime, kept himself busy writing to many newspapers and friends, both in India and England. He wrote to Henry S.Polak who was then in India. It was during this time, he came in contact with the Russian thinker, Count Leo Tolstoy, an exponent of the SATYAGRAHA doctrine. On the 23rd June 1909, Gandhi left for England with

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17. Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi- Vol. 8 & 9, Pages 448 and x,xi.

Hajee Habib, to press his case before the British Government. In London, he met one Justice Amir Ali. Addressing a letter to the Under Secretary of Colonies, on the 29th September I909, Gandhi wrote that: I8.

> "I venture to think that the Earl of Crewe will be able to enter into the feelings of the British Indian Muslims who, for the purpose of earning a honest livelihood, have settled in that colony———."

Gandhi returned to South Africa from London on the 30th November I909, and then a series of meetings were held. His momentory unpopularity happened to be shortlived, and that was mainly because the people could not understand him and his methods. The struggle against the the Indian Registration Act went on, and Jan Smuts characterised the SATYAGRAHA movement as 'a kind of war'. In the meantime, on the Ist of June I9I0, the State of Union of South Africa was born. 'The Gentleman's Agreement' between the parties did not satisfy the agitators, and after that the Gandhi-Smuts correspondence of March I9II, paved the way for the provisional settlement, and the final settlement came only after another intensive campaign.

Among the many interesting campaigns against the 'Black Act', the most significant one was the trial of Harilal, Gandhi's twenty-year old son, in Johannesburg, on the 10th August I908, for failing to be in possession of a registered certificate. Harilal pleaded guilty, when Gandhi defended him. I9.

This struggle that started in I906 took six years to end, and in I9I2, the whole thing seemed to have cooled down. With this Gandhi became an acknowledged leader of his people in South Africa. Everyone had a good opinion of the entire movement that went on so long and so steadfastly. Even Gandhi himself was satisfied at the outcome of his endeavours. He said, that: 20.

> "I found General Smuts who went through the whole of that campaign, at the end of it saying that if all conducted themselves as SATYAGRAHIs had done, they should have nothing to fear."

Annie Besant's activities in India, had spread over a vast area like those branches of the banyan tree of Adyar where she used to have frequent gatherings, lectures etc. In I9I0 she addressed a conference of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The Governor of Madras, Sir Arthur Lawley, after hearing her brilliant speech, remarked that: 2I.

> "Indeed what can I add to the stirring words of Mrs. Besant's, which we have just listened to? You know the quality of her matchless eloquence, and it needs no reminder from me to remind you that her voice is never raised save to move her hearers to some nobler impulse, to some loftier ideals, to some high plane of thought. In the name of the society (for the prevention of cruelty to animals) I should like to thank her for the splendid address which she delivered to us, and I hope that it will not only stir the hearts, as it must have done, of every man and woman in this hall, who have heard it, but I hope that her voice will ring loud and clear far beyond the walls of this Hall."

I8. Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi- Vol. 9 & I0.
I9. " " " " Vol. 8, Page 436,
20. G.D.Tendulkar- 'Mahatma'- Vol. I- page 28I,
2I. Annie- the Autobiography- the I939 Ed.

Annie's cultural activities included education of some intelligent youngmen. That enthusiasm of hers did not take her too far. The whole episode began like this. While she was in Madras, she came in contact with one Naranayya who had come from Madanapalle with his children. He had just become a widower. As he was a poor man, Mrs. Besant offered a job to him in the Esoteric Section of the Society. Krishnamurthi was his eighth son. His mother believed that like god Krishna who was also the eighth child of his mother, he was 'destined for something extraordinary'. As a boy, it was said, Krishnamurthi 'was thin, his hair long, and suffered from malaria. He liked to gaze out of the windows and think of the liberty waiting for him outside. Naturally his teachers had a very low opinion of him and his prospects'. 22.

Here the whole 'story' needs to be recounted. Annie took Krishnamurthi and his younger brother Nityananda, under her guardianship and put them in charge of C. Leadbeater, whose mystical training became effective from the Ist August I909. He was taking the boys with him for walks, cycling and so on. Somehow Naranayya did not like this sort of intimacy of Leadbeater with the boys and, therefore, he objected to his handling them. Mrs. Besant, worried by this kind of restiveness on the part of Naranayya, 'resolved to remove herself and her wards to Benares Central Hindu College. On the 6th October I9I0, there was a big celebration of Annie Besant's 63rd birthday. On the IIth November of that year, the Viceroy Lord Minto visited the college. A few days later, she left for Europe with the boys, where she had, as usual, lecture programmes. It was during this time, Naranayya was coaxed by the political opponents of Mrs. Besant to proceed against her and recover the boys back from her custody.

The charge that Leadbeater was misguiding the boys with the occult training, was only a rumour and that well-spread rumour remained as such. The ardent Theosophists like Dr. Bhagavan Das, S. Subramania Iyer and Jinarajadasa had known that there was no substance in the talk but the voice of the Brahmin fahatics, supported by THE HINDU daily, prevailed. To add to all that fun, Leadbeater had announced that Krishnamurthi as 'Our Krishna', and Annie herself proclaimed that the boy was to be a Messaiah, an AVATAAR and so on. These things certainly aggravated matters.

Consequently ~~his~~ people began to talk not only against Leadbeater and Mrs. Besant, ~~against~~ but also against the entire Theosophical Society which was described as just hoax. In that way Leadbeater was a double sinner due to his occultism, and he happened to have been universally unpopular. Many people in India were not well-disposed towards him, and those people included Mohandas Gandhi. Here is what Gandhi said about him and about Theosophy, in a letter to one Dr. Pranjivan Mehta, from his Tolstoy Farm in South Africa. This is a blunt assessment of facts. The letter, dated the 8th May I9II, said that: 23.

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22. Annie- by Prof. Nethercot, Page I36,
23. Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. II, Page 64.

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"Your two letters reached me this week.

"I have held ~~xxxxxxxx~~ since 1899 the same views that you do about Theosophy. They pressed me hard that year to join the Society but I refused in no uncertain terms saying that, though the Society s rule respecting brotherhood appealed to me, I had no sympathy for its search for occult powers. I do not think that Mrs. Besant is a hypocrite; she is credulous and is duped by Leadbeater. When an Englishman suggested to me to read Leadbeater's THE LIFE AFTER DEATH, I flatly refused to do so as I had grown suspicious of him after reading his other writings. As to his humbug, I came to know of it later. All the same, I have drawn from Theosophy the lesson which seemed to me worth drawing. Blavatsky's KEY had made a good impression on me. Theosophy sent many Hindus inquiring into their own religion. It has performed the same service as Christianity has. Moreover, Theosophists believe in the same basic principles as we do and, therefore, it is enough to come across good persons among them.

"Though there is ~~dearth~~ no dearth of crooks at all levels, from the highest to the lowest among the Vaishnav and other sects, we do find gems like Narasimha Mehta (a saint-poet of Gujarat) and Bhojo Bhagat (a medieval Gujarati poet) amongst them. Ritch was a Theosophist. He urged me to become a member. Not only did I not become one, I helped him to be free from that humbug. Polak is a Theosophist, but he stays miles away from the practices and writings of Theosophists.

"When I was in India, I sent Gokuldas to the (Central Hindu) College at Benares. Then also I was disappointed. Even afterwards, as long as I had not come to see the light, which I have now, that is, as long as I had ~~outgrown~~ not outgrown the fascination for modern education, I used to inquire about institutions like the Benares College and even wished to send the boys there, thinking that something was better than nothing. All that is over now. Cordes, at Phoenix, is a staunch Theosophist. I have not yet been able to get him out of the hold of Theosophy. In himself, he appears to be a sincere man. He has gone to Adyar at present, against all persuasion. Being honest, he will see the fraud that is there and turn his back on it, unless he is taken in. It is worth ascertaining what humbug prevails there safe under the cover of Mrs. Besant's goodness. Her desire to pass off as the 'Master' is understandable. One who runs after occult powers cannot but become so intoxicated. It is for these reasons that all our SHASTRAs have looked upon occult powers and Yogic attainments as unworthy pursuits. And that is the reason, I think, why BHAKTI YOGA is regarded as superior to HATHA YOGA."

This is certainly a most trenchant letter that has come from Gandhi's pen. He was then 42 years old and Annie 64. Gandhi dismisses Leadbeater and his occultism as fraud, and Theosophy as just humbug, but respectfully sympathises with Mrs. Besant's dilemma of 'running after occult powers'.

But Mrs. Besant's real prowess was seen when Naranayya, instigated by the opponents of herself and Leadbeater, filed a suit against her demanding that his sons be returned to him. The charges against Leadbeater had already cost her prestige enormously, but now she did not hesitate to face the situation squarely. Moreoever, she had appeared before the courts of law many a time right from the days of her divorce proceedings. With Charles Bradlaugh, and as a very energetic social and political worker in England, she had advocated her cases very brilliantly though she was an honours graduate in science. She had always faced challenges boldly and come out successfully. Now, of course, she would not let the cynics of India go their own way. Naranayya's ~~xx~~ suit was first filed in the district court of Chengalpet, and later it was transferred to the High Court. Mrs. Besant herself argued her case while C.P.Ramaswami Iyer was the plaintiff'c counsel.

This case became a sensational incident in the social history of India, and its proceedings echoed all over, especially when it was taken as far as the Privu Council of the British empire. As to the case itself, it was said that: 24.

> "In part the reflection took the shape of legal proceedings against Annie in respect of the guardianship she had assumed of Krishnamurthi and his brother Nityananda. Their father sought to deprive her of this guardianship--------She created a sensation, not only because she was her own advocate--------(she) could also present even an intricate case such as this with great legal acumen. I still remember how she surrounded herself with innumerable law volumes in her room at Adyar--------I remember how she, Mr. Leadbeater and I would day by day motor to the High Court- she full of her warrior spirit and the two of us vicariously fired with it. The books- volumes of them, had gone down before hand, but the precious documents, on which she was going to rely for her speeches she clutched in her hand as she might have clutched jewels of great price in the midst of robber band----------Then into the High Court ----------she with books and papers in the court room stretched out in all directions far and wide, and her opposing counsel, C.P.Ramaswami Iyer, equally the centre of a library of literature--------Juniors were buzzing about, and the room is full of the hush of a multitudinous expectancy."

After that the judge majestically walked in and 'takes his seat as everybody rises, most of them perfunctorily, but she (Annie Besant) to the measure of her full height, gazing upon the judge with her piercing eyes and leonine appearence.'

Well, after many years, it was confidently assessed that the whole thing was fabricated against Annie. The boys whom she brought up did not evidently like their widower father, Mrs. Besant had nourished the boys as her own children. Ramaswami Iyer argued the case brilliantly and won the approbation of his esteemed opponent, Mrs. Besant, and after the case was over, Annie took him as one of her trusted lieutenants and friends. Annie's biographer sums up the whole thing as below: 25.

> "The question of the relationship between Naranayya, THE HINDU daily and Ramaswami Iyer, remains a moot one, in spite of the court's acceptance of their denial of any collusion. Throughout the trial their claim of innocence was maintained and yet when in 1956 I talked with Ramaswami Iyer, he told me that he had been hired for the case by THE HINDU, for which he had already undertaken some minor legal work. Certainly one can properly wonder where the impoverished Naranayya got the money to pay for all the legal assistance he received in this lengthy trial----------Could there have been an Indian somewhere in the wood-pile?"

As to the proceedings of the case itself, Prof. Nethercot said, that:

> "The victory was all Annie's, so far as the testimony on the Leadbeater-Krishnamurthi story was revealed in the court. Time after time in her cross examination, she discomfitted Ramaswami Iyer's star witnesses with her shrewd questions and arguments. When Naranayya during his testimony and explanation of his peculiar actions burst into hysterical tears in his excitement and incoherence, she took full advantage of his weakness by leading him into an explanation of Brahmin attitudes and customs and their differences from Western manners, and eventually succeeded in getting an admission that he had really made a charge against an innocent boy, his own son. She also trapped him into obvious contradictions."

It did not end there. As to the controversy that was raging over Leadbeater's role in handling the boys and the accusations hurled on him, the biographer of Annie Besant, said as under:

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24. George Arundale's Preface to Annie's Autobiography,
25. Annie- by Prof. Nethercot, Page 187 & 190.

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"Moving next to her own defence, she started modestly by craving the indulgence of the court for any errors she, as a lay lawyer, might make in legal procedure. Handling herself like a professional in the witness box and under Iyer's cross-examination, she was unshaken in her proof of the impossibilities of Laxman's story, in her vindication of Leadbeaters's integrity, and her description of her training of Krishna and Nitya, which had already cost her Rs. 27,000, and which she planned to spend much more. Her handling of sexual questions raised was frank and unembarrassed. She then paraded her own procession of witnesses, Mrs. Van Hook as a doctor, Arundale, Wood and Wadia--------and she skilfully turned all the testimony to support her case."

The entire proceedings of this interesting case deserved to be brought out in print again. Very many acrimonious epithets were passed on by each and everyone, and in that C. Leadbeater was taken as the main culprit, and then came Mrs. Besant who supported him. But those who knew Bishop Leadbeater intimately say that much was said against him without understanding the true aspect of the story. George Arundale was one of those who gave an eloquent tribute to Leadbeater, but the public would not buy all that he said so easily. The newspapers, both in India and England, had their own interpretations, and they were 'full of inaccuracies' and THE TIMES, London, itself was one such paper which said, that:

"The revelations of the trial cast rather grave doubts on the character of the influence of mysticism in general, especially in India." 26.

The case, in fact, caused a good deal of commotion. Mrs. Besant proved herself as a great advocate without being professional one at that. Her opponent, Ramaswami Iyer, fiercely argued against her, but in the evening of the same day he would attend her lectures on Indian social reform. He never had the slightest doubt of her complete sincerity in everything she said or did. When the case was finally taken to the Privy Council in London, Mrs. Besant had her old friends there of her Fabian days, like Lord Haldane, who was then Lord Chancellor and Chairman of the Judicial Committee. The boys, Krishna and Nitya, were also there as 'interveners', and Annie's son Digby Besant also watched his mother in action in the court, and she sat with Viscountess Churchill. The whole court room and galleries were all full, and the whole of London's press corps was there. In this case, their Lordships 'placed particular stress on the failure of Madras courts to consider the interests and wishes of minors involved. Although a father cannot legally substitute another as a guardian in his place during a minority, among either Hindus or English, and although such authority as he gives is revokable, nevetheless, when associations have been created or expectations on the part of the infants' aroused which would be undesirable in their interests to disturb or diaappoint."

The Judicial Committee felt that the Indian order to return the boys to India could not stand because it could not lawfully be carried out without their consent "without an order from the court exercising the jurisdiction of the Crown over infants in this country. They dismissed the suit with costs to Naranayya both there and in the courts elsewhere. This decision was finally characterised by Annie herself, that: 27.

"It established for India--------that when minors came before a Court of Chancery, it was their welfare that must govern the decision, and that no court should presume

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26. Annie- by Prof. Nethercot- Pages 191 & 196,
27. " " " " 200 & 201.

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to give judgment concerning them which had not ascertained their wishes————which for this purpose is taken at 14 years for boys. The result of that decision was that the whole long struggle came to an end and we finished up where we were at the beginning, with the exception of the large amount of money wasted."

Thus Annie won her case on technical grounds, and she was greatly pleased. Naranayya gave up the battle. Mrs. Besant did not claim the costs, either. She was certainly a great lady in every respect. All her opponents and enemies were put down. Those who were wavering and sitting on the fence, offered to join her again but Annie was sorry for Indians and their mentality. That was why they needed modern education, she thought. Dr. Bhagavan Das confessed years after that: 28.

"I was never worthy to unloose the latchet of her shoes; yet she allowed me the privilege of doing so."

Prof. Nethercot said that THE TIMES editorial, like many others, linked the events of the trial with Mrs. Besant's efforts to have the Central Hindu College turned into a University and conceded:

"If she is not as some of her many admirers are pleased to describe her, 'the great woman of the day- the author, editor, orator, philosopher, occultist, teacher and leader of nations, she has ability, eloquence and varied energy————and in many ways she is exercising influence over the youth of India."

So that was certainly a sensational case in India at that time, out of which Annie came out in flying colours. But Leadbeater suffered in his reputation and that was mostly due to his occultism, which even Gandhi described as 'humbug' and 'Hypocrisy'. All the same, Gandhi, in South Africa, had no smooth time, either. Like Annie he was also greatly misunderstood by his people there. When he assured Gen. Smuts of his co-operation to implement the Act of getting the names of indentured labourers registered, the people doubted his motives and asked, 'Had be been bought over so cheaply and so soon?'

But people could hardly know the minds of practical thinkers and reformers. Gandhi's activities "were inspired by the fundamental conviction that political freedom was but the expression of moral freedom and that the latter had to be won through a struggle not against an external but an internal enemy." 29.

From 1908 to 1913, South African history was the history of Gen. Smuts and Gandhi with their quarrels and negotiations. In April 1911, Government of British India officially notified that emigration of indentured labour to South Africa was to cease. That was a triumph for Gandhi and his supporters in India. He had been trying to get Gokhale to South Africa for some years, and in response to the 'pressing invitations of Gandhi', Gokhale went there on the 22nd October 1912. Gandhi was then busy in Cape Town, meeting the British members of the parliament and other officials. Gokhale landed there 'entirely on his own initiative' in order to 'investigate the whole Indian question in South Africa for himself'. He was welcommed in a royal style by all classes of people, including those officials of the South African Government. 30.

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28. ~~Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi- Vol. 10~~ Annie- Prof. Nethercot, Page 196.
29. George Arundale's Preface to Annie's Autobiography, 1939 Ed.
30. Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi- Vol. 10 & 11

Gandhi took Gokhale all over, and they talked over the problem of the Indians in the colony. As days passed on, the struggle spread over other areas from Natal, and about 8,000 workers were off the field and joined the agitation. Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy of India, speaking at Madras in November 1913, gave expression to the growing concern and sympathy for the passive resistors in South Africa. The people found that their struggle was imperative and their programme included that: 31.

> "Not only crossing the border into Transval but also of hawking or trading without a licence and refusing to produce one on demand——The campaign was inaugurated on the 15th September 1913, and even women led by Kasturbai, set out from Durban for Volksrust for courting arrest. It was a symbolic act against a mighty Government. They were arrested on the 16th September 1913——."

The news of this struggle flared all over. Lord Hardinge's remarks in India happened to boost public opinion, and he demanded a Commission of Inquiry to go through the entire case. Finally things were normalised, and Gandhi spcke to Indians and 'desuribed the settlement embodied in the Indian Relief Act of June 26, 1913, as the Magna Carta of Indians in South Africa, because it marked the change in the policy of the Government towards them and established their right to be consulted in matters affecting them and to have their reasonable wishes respected'. 32.

> "It was thus with the sense of mission fulfilled, that in July 18, 1914, Gandhi took leave of South Africa, the country which has 'become to me a sacred and dear land next only to my motherland."

Thus Gandhi's twenty-year long work in South Africa had come to an end with the 'mission fulfilled', but during this time, Gandhi made history in that part of the world. He had hundreds and even thousands of people who had attached to him and to his work while he was there, and his philosophy of action and of life could be known by his voluminous letters that he had left behind. Writing to Maganlal Gandhi on the 2nd April 1910, he said that:

> "Please do not carry unnecessarily on your head the burden of emancipating India. Emanicipate your own self. Even that burden is very great. Nobility in soul consists in realising that you are yourself India. In your emancipation is the amancipation of India. All else is make-believe."

Though Gandhi did not have much regard for Theosophy as such, he had with him many Theosophists whom he had respected. One such man was John S. Cordes Junior of Hamburg. He was a German Theosophist "who gave up a lucrative post to become a member of the Phoenix settlement and was in charge of the school at Phoenix and also ~~for~~ after the nursing work in the colony. In 1914, he was doing a year's course at the Theosophical Society in Adyar under Mrs. Besant whom he greatly admired. Later he went to India to join the Sevagram where he died in 1960." 33.

Both Gopalakrishna Gokhale and Srinivasa Sastri came fully impressed by the tremendous influence that Gandhi weilded, and he used that matchless weapon of non-violent

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31. Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi- Vol. 12, P. viii.
32. " " " " Vol. 12, Page 503,
33. Gandhi's articles & Collections of letters.

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non-cooperation to fight against the imperial power. His method sometimes seemed to be drastic and too revolutionary, but he would explain that:

> "My non-violence does not admit of running away from danger. Between violence and cowardly fight, I can only prefer violence--------Non-violence is the summit of bravery."

However, now Gandhi was on his way to India but not yet reached, while Annie, after her splendid success in the case concerning Krishnamurthi and his brother Nityananda, went ahead with her usual programme, though a bit lost in her prestige. And yet she was no ordinary person and, in fact, she was a woman of destiny. She always thought that there was a purpose in her life. Even Gandhi learnt a good deal from her precepts and practices and principles. "Though theosophy was her base, she made Hindusim her popular theme wherever she went. A group of Brahmins in Bangalore had asked her "to lead a national Hindu movement" and, in fact, she did only that during her forty years stay in India. 34.

Annie Besant used to be there wherever there was any Hindu movement, Hindu conference or Hindu cultural programme, especially in Madras and Benares. When the Congress of 'Universal Races' was held in London in July I9II to discuss the racial question in various aspects, Annie Besant was also there along with the representatives of the world religions and philosophers. From India Prof. G.K.Gokhale was there, and Mohandas Gandhi believed 'that India can have no direct benefit from the Races Congress'.

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34. Prof. Nathemoot- quoted Countess Wachtmeister, Page 20,
& Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 2, Page I52.

CHAPTER V.

ON THEIR WAY TO INDIAN POLITICS.

During those twenty years from 1894 to 1914, no Indian politician had taken Annie Besant seriously although everyone knew her as a great theosophist and as religious and social reformer. A couple of Indians of those days might have been great orators but none of them in India or anywhere else, was equal to Annie Besant in knowledge, eloquence, dynamism and sincerity of purpose. During her 86 years of active life, and half a century of stormy career, she must have delivered between 10,000 to 15,000 speeches all over the world excepting North Asia, Africa and Latin America. She was certainly a God-sent messenger of Hindu religion, and it was only through her the several aspects of the religion like JNANA, KARMA, SAMKHYA, YOGA, ATMA, reincarnation, transmigration of soul and such subjects were made known throughout the world. As a KARMA YOGINI, she had, of course, all along her way, her share of trials and tribulations, admirers and enemies, court proceedings and public applauses all over.

Annie's determination to fight out her humiliations and discomfitures, was extraordinary. After the case against her by Naranayya and his supporters, she seemed to have been fallen down in popularity although she won an universal applause for her fighting capacity, arguing talents and for beating hollow all her opponents. The more she saw that her popularity had fallen somewhere the more vigorously would she fight to restore her image. Her fighting talents were really remarkable.

"In consequence of the legal action taken against me", she said, "I have thought it well for the sake of the public repute of the Theosophical Society, to enter more than I have hitherto done into the social life of Madras", and she did what she said. Annie was there again, not only in Madras but all over India, Europe, America and Australia. Now she went about as a victor after her long court battle which she courageously faced. Her lofty character was proved beyond doubt, and her great talents were revealed at every court beginning from the district court of Madras to the Empire's Privy Council in England. Her plan to revitalise the theosophical movement which might have suffered in prestige because of Naranayya's case and Leadbeater's occultism, was dynamic. Her plans for the educational expansion schemes were proceeding. She was already a 'Protector of the Order of the Star in the East'. THE HERALD OF THE STAR was published every month from London, and she made Krishnamurthi its official editor. Arundale, Leadbeater, Jinarajadasa and others kept on contributing articles to her many journals.

"The reference to the Indian National Congress", Prof. Nethercot wrote, "a body as yet without any power other than advisory and discussional, was significant as putting Mrs. Besant's proposals as one within a wider frame. In the autumn when the legal pressure in the guardianship became somewhat relaxed, though not yet relinquished,

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she announced an ambitions series of eight public lectures on Indian social reform, under the title of WAKE UP INDIA-----". The chair in this notable series was occupied by in succession by various leading civic men of Madras, who obviously did not fear being tarred by their association with her. Most of the Madras newspapers were lavish in their praise of her talks, at one of which the audience burst out cheering when she alluded to her 'late learned opponent in the High Court', C.P.Ramaswami Iyer, and praised him for his services to the Motherland. I

Here one can find Annie as a dynamic social reformer, flawless and selfless, and with no malice nor hatred for her opponents. It was she who was responsible to bring up Ramaswami Iyer from the position of an ordinary advocate to the all-India eminence. In recognising talents and rewarding those talented, irrespective of any personal or political considerations, was her great trait.

Some recent writers fancy that Gokhale, Tilak and Gandhi as great Trinity of the 'makers of modern Hndia'. But this is an absurd statement. The modern India was made by the British, and long before these three men came to the Indian scene, there were already British educated giants among the modern Indians like Rammohan Roy, Sir Syed Ahmad, Dadabhai Naoroji, Surendranath Benerjie and several others and before those men who awoke the country, Gokhale, Tilak and Gandhi were mere late-commers though not pygmies in their own times. However, in between all these persons there was always the soothing influence of the European nationalists in India, beginning from Allan O. Hume to Mrs. Annie Besant. In fact, those upstart Indians with a bit of modern education in those days, seemed to have felt sad and uncomfortable when they saw a woman, a foreign woman in saree, going about preaching Hinduism and nationalism together. Those people certainly felt that their place was usurped by a dominating lady.

As long as Gandhi was in South Africa as a lawyer, conciliator and agitator, he was always in European dress but there were his photographs when he showed himself in his Kathiawada costume with his usual DHOTI, turban, etc. When Ghokale was on tour over the British colonies, he spent considerable time in South Africa with Gandhi. In a group photograph taken at Durban in 1912, Gandhi is seen sitting with Gokhale as a well-dressed barrister which he rightly was. Gandhi's photograph in uniform were seen taken during the Boer War in 1899, when he raised volunteers and served the sick and the wounded, and again in 1906 during the Zulu rebellion when he was Sergeant-major of a stretcher-bearer's corps.

Gokhale admired Gandhi from the day they got acquainted with each other from 1896, and bestowed his unflinching support to Gandhi. He defended Gandhi's passive resistance movement and at a meeting in September 1909, in Bombay, Gokhale said, that: 2.

"What is this passive resistance? Passive resistance to an unjust law or an oppressive measure is a refusal to acquiesce in that law or measure and a readiness to

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1 Nethercot- the Last Four Lives of Annie- Page 214,
2 Collections of Gokhales' Writings and Speeches,

suffer the penalty instead which may be prescribed as an alternative. If we strongly and clearly and conscientiously feel the grave injustice of a law and there is no other way to obtain redress, I think refusal to acquiesce in it, taking the consequences of such refusal is the only course left to those who place conscience and self-respect above their material or immediate interests."

During the Lahore Congress sessions of 1909, while speaking on a resolution on South Africa, Gopalakrishna Gokhale said, that:

"Gentlemen, it is one of the privileges of my life that I know Mr. Gandhi intimately, and, I can tell you that a purer, a nobler, a braver, and a more exalted spirit has never moved on this earth. Mr. Gandhi is one of those men who lived an austerely simple life--------devoted to all the highest principles of love to their fellow-beings and to truth and justice---------He is a man who may be well described as a man among men, a hero among the heroes."

In those days and even now, these kinds of tributes with choice words were liberally used by many politicians while praising their friends and supporters. But here one should see how far Gokhale had agreed with Gandhi's passive resistance movement is again a question because it was clear that by about the year 1912, he did not seem to have approved of it fully. That was what the members of the Servants of India Society of Gokhale made the people understand after his death. Tilak and other senior leaders of the time, too, had never agreed with Gandhi's methods.

There were a few young revolutionaries in those days like Savarkar, Aurobindo and others. Gandhi and Savarkar met in London in 1909, when the latter's slogan was 'Hinduise or Indianise all politics and militarise Hindudom'. "He made no bones about his conviction that Gandhi's doctrine of absolute nonviolence was absolutely sinful". 3.

When Muslims of India were agitating for separate representation, Savarkar shared with Gandhi the belief that it was perfectly possible for Muslims and Hindus to live together peacefully. 'It was perhaps the only belief they held in common. 'Hindus are the heart of Hindustan', Savarkar declared-------Anyway like Gandhi, he lived long enough to know that Hindus and Muslims could not live together peacefully." 4.

Savarkar came to limelight when on the 29th December 1909, the District Magistrate of Nasik, A.M.T. Jackson, was shot down while attending a farewell party in his nonour. The assailant was immediately arrested, and Savarkar was then in England, from where it was said, he sent the pistol that killed the English officer. Savarkar was later arrested in London but escaped from the prison. He was rearrested in France and then put into a ship sailing to India. But Savarkar did another feat by jumping off the ship and swimming half-a-mile to the shore when he was arrested again on the French soil. Later, of course, he was convicted to serve a long prison term and was transported to Andamans. He was, however, released in 1924 when the Labour Party government took office in England. After that he organised and fostered the communal organization, known as Hindu Mahasabha. From then on, Gandhi and his non-violence slogan were the chief focuss of the attack by V.D.Savarkar and his organization.

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3. Robert Payne- on Gandhi.
4. Theodre de Bary- Sources of Indian Tradition- Vol. II.

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Gandhi's South African career was over by the end of 1913. After winding up his establishment and law practice, and after asking his friends to look after his Phoenix Farm, the journal INDIAN OPINION, etc he left South Africa for good. With Kasturba, he set sail for England after sending his children directly to India. When Gandhi and Kasturba were on their way to Europe, they heard that the war had already broken out. They reached London in August 1914, and were there for four months, and with some added prestige after his successful campaign in South Africa. He had now felt that the struggle that he had led "had more than proved the immense superiority of right over might, of soul force over brute force, of love and reason over hate and passion."

As the war in Europe was on, Gandhi, despite his bout of illness, was active in London organising an Indian Ambulance Corps as an expression of loyalty to the Empire in its hour of need. Thus his Ambulance Corps was just a symbol of his support to the British, but there again he had an occasion 'to offer SATYAGRAHA on an issue which touched the Indian self-respect and won his point- the right to be consulted in the disposition of the corps'. Gokhale was then in London and he met Gandhi with whom he talked about the problems concerning India. Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Mrs. Sarojini Naidu too met Gandhi in London for the first time. In an article that Gandhi wrote in his INDIAN OPINION, he said that: 5.

> "It is significant that, as Passive Resistance became stronger and purer, it succeeded more and more in bringing together the best representatives of the European and Indian section of the population. With each new phase come new triumphs and new friends--------The movement commenced with a demand for the repeal of the Transval Act 2, of 1907. The Act was repealed, and its threatened extension to other parts of South Africa was completely prevented--------The system of indentured immigration from India, that had been regarded almost as a permanent feature of South African economics, has been ended. The hated £ 3/- tax has been repealed and its attendant misery and insult was destroyed------."

That was how Gandhi gave in a nutshell the results of his 'seven-year war' against the South African government, during 1906 to 1913. His 'soldiers' in the war included even Kasturibai who had joined the 'army' on her own accord, 'Mrs. Gandhi made the offer on her own initiative, and I do not want to debar her,' wrote Gandhi in a letter to Gokhale on the 19th April 1913.

Thus Gandhi seemed to have been satisfied by his performance in South Africa, and his belief in the power of SATYAGRAHA and in the value of soul-force, became all the more stronger from then on. Writing to A.H.West, while in London, Gandhi said in his letter dated the 20th November 1914, that:

> "I am longing to go to India and so is Mrs. Gandhi, but a sense of duty--------a right sense of duty compels me to remain here."

Gandhi and Kasturba began to pack home after a four-month stay in London, and they were given a farewell dinner at the Westminister Palace Hotel, and those present at the dinner included Charles Roberts, Henry Cotton, Mr.& Mrs. J.H.Polak and several others.

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5. INDIAN OPINION of South Africa &
Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol.12.

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Gandhi took leave of England on the 9th December 1914 by ship that sailed for India- 'the country where the greatest spiritual treasures were to be found for the comforting and uplifting of the whole world'. Gandhi's political outlook was also revealed by his emphasis on work to strengthen the ties between India and Great Britain 'by each giving of its best to the other'. Gandhi's feeling on board the ship was set down in a letter to A.H.West stating that: 6.

> "I have been so often prevented from reaching India, and it seems hardly real that I am sitting in a ship bound for India. And having reached there what shall I do with myself? However,'LEAD KINDLY LIGHT amid the encircling gloom, lead thou me on'. That thought is my solace."

'Out of South Africa there came a wizard across the seas', said the poetess Sarojini. But this wizard, then 45, was still in his ship over the Mediterranean. He had converted himself to the doctrine of non-violence. A successful barrister earning £ 5,000 a year in those days, stopped being commercial and started an agricultural colony after devoting himself tp poverty, truth and other simple virtues. His reading of Ruskin, Tolstoy, Thoreau and the Gita had transformed him to asceticism, and he had read extensively on various other subjects, also!

By this time, Gandhi had already had many 'political tussles and tumbles'. He learned to handle men as well as crowds. He was absolutely inflexible on any matter of principle and wonderfully supple on minor details.

> "He was continually exasperated by diet. He tried countless experiments. Finally he gave up salt, tea and meals after sunset. He began too, to observe Monday as a day of silence. Goat's milk seemed an ideal food for the observation of BRAHMACHARYA or self-restraint, but it was only after a terrific struggle that he consented to take it, since after all, it was not strictly a vegetable substance. Meantime, he struggled to maintain his vow of continence." 7.

Gandhi's motto was something that was very far from the reach of common man, and in fact, he moulded his life of simplicity and sainthood after suffering and under-going ordeals of self-discipline and self-suffering. Gandhi was not a saint in the term of ancient Rishis ethics. He was literally a man of the world and yet he stood above all as a man of God. Therein was his greatness as a future Mahatma. He found that where there was truth, sincerity and true dedication to service, there was God and there ought to be God. He did not find anything in the French revolution or the Russian revolution despite the liberty they brought to their people. That liberty that came with blood, he thought, would melt in the blood.

That was the same belief and even the creed of Mrs. Annie Besant who consistently protested against any form of revolutionary agitations either in the form of active resistance or passive resistance. In this one can see her as a great person, or a greater person than anyone else, and she had the tamerity to openly say where she stood on that much talked of subject of non-violence and non-violent cooperation. It is here the two

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6. Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi- Vol. I2,
7. John Gunther-'Inside Asia'- Page 351.

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great persons of the modern times widely differed. The story of the persistent struggle of Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant reveal the same thing. Truth, service and sacrifice were the hallmarks of their life, too. They literally agreed with and even practised the entire Gandhian principles both in their private and public life although they failed to make a political capital out of their personal virtues by demonstrating them in the streets.

Annie, like Gandhi, and in many ways, more than Gandhi, was a woman of extraordinary virtues and character. She was a saintess, and also an incarnation of Kaali or Durgi, to whom she was deeply devoted. Her admirers had already hailed her as 'mother' when she was in her fifties, and as the life-time President of the International Theosophical Society. She was a dedicated Hindu in her heart of hearts and in her daily habits. She was strictly a vegetarian. She bathed daily in the sacred Ganga in Allahabad and wore saree regularly, often shoeless, a LOTAH in hand when those Hindus of North India, those Beharees and Bengalees would express their joy. Annie and her party would squat on the floor in Indian fashion while she had been 'given addresses in three languages, as well as a separate one by some ladies in the Zanana'. 8.

Among Annie's social and cultural activities, the most outstanding was her work in the field of education. She launched a number of national schools all over the country apart from a few colleges like the one at Madanapalle and, of course, the one at Benares, which was then at the stage of becoming a University sooner than expected. As all other European statesmen before her, she too wrote that:

> "The needs of India are, among others, the development of national spirit, and an education founded on Indian ideals and enriched, not dominated, by the thought and culture of the West."

Annie also did another good job. She kept the extremist politicians at bay. That was a time when a kind of misguided nationalism was raising its head and for everything that the foreigner did, motives were freely attributed. Referring to the extremist like Tilak, Savarkar and others whom she sought to keep 'in their place', she wrote on the subject, 'Unrest in Schools and Colleges', and said that: 9.

> "They might abuse me as they wished but as long as I was the President of the Central Hindu College, I would defend it against their attempts to wreck it it as they strive to wreck everything useful in India that does not place its neck beneath their feet."

Mrs. Besant got very good support from the Viceroy Lord Minto for her educational and cultural development work. She called him 'a real friend of India' and as 'a brave good man and just and mild ruler'. Minto had always encouraged her activities. Many native princes also undertook to help her good work, and they knew how noble and dedicated she was. Many of her speeches were fully reported in the newspapers of both India and England. Once Lord Minto invited Mrs. Besant for a DURBAR in March 1909, when cer-

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8. BEHARI HERALD- quoted by Nethercot & the Autobiography of Annie.
9. THEOSOPHIST- quoted by Nethercot- Page 114.

certain relics of the Buddha were presented by him to the Burmese envoys. In the great assembly of princes and nobles, Lady Minto received Annie in the Throne Room. The Viceroy himself crossed the room to converse with her for ten minutes. Esther Bright later wrote, that: "Annie Besant emerged smiling and very friendly, having got everything her own way".

Annie, as a lady of the ruling class but at heart an Indian and a Hindu, mixed freely in the assemblies of both the ruler and the ruled, at the Throne Room of the Viceregal palace and at the hutments of the slum-dwellers, equally alike and freely. No other Indian nationalist had so far mixed up with the people that way. She was certainly a moving star of India of the first two decades of this century. It was Annie who gave a practical idealism and agitational fervour to the Indian politics, and no one else. Referring to her fervent nationalism, Gandhi had this to say a few years after his return from South Africa, that: IO.

> "Annie Besant, within a few years, brought Home Rule within the consciousness of every Indian village, let alone the towns and cities. As had no other Indian worker, she embodied SWARAJ with the whole of her being. For over sixteen years she worked, literally day and night, for the cause which had been entrusted to her, and here again SHE WAS AT ONCE THE ENVY AND DESPAIR OF HER ASSOCIATES."

Annie had many malicious opponents and most of them were Indians and Hindus. Once she taunted one of her critics and said, that:

> "I grant that my perennial assailant choses a quaint form of amusement. But what of that? It takes all sorts of people to make the world!"

Yes, that was true. Thus she was at once 'the envy and despair of her associates'. Annie had very many grandiose schemes to regenerate the Indian masses. Apart from her lectures, writings and newspaper articles through NATIONAL REFORMER, LINK, ADYAR BULLETIN, THEOSOPHIST, COMMONWEAL, NEW INDIA etc, her scheme of national education that began with her starting of the Central Hindu College, was crowned with success. Her national integration work had begun very early in her Indian career. Many a time she argued to end 'petty animosities' between one province and another, and unless worked for it, she said, 'no broader reforms would come'. In her petition to the King in 1910, for the University Education reforms, she had already offered the first organised plan for the educational reform in India.

And yet another outstanding work of Annie was her effort to end the caste system. She was a spirited Hindu than any Hindu by birth, and she defended her new religion vehemently all over the world, but the caste system, she said, was a harmful institution and that should be destroyed, 'not merely reformed', and she even advocated practising of inter-caste and inter-racial association, dining and wedding. Perhaps, this stand of hers encouraged George Arundale to marry Rukmini Devi, and her lieutenant Jinarajadasa, the theosophist, to marry Dorothy Graham.

IO. From Mahatma Gandhi's writings (italics by this author).

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Annie was the fore-runner of many things in which the Congressmen tried to dabble a decade or two later. She sympathised with the cause of untouchables and, in fact, she had opened schools for them. She called them PANCHAMAS or the fifth caste, whom Gandhi called by the term HARIJANs. Annie also showed all that she preached by practising herself, and she educated the people to treat untouchables and touchables.

In the same vein, she lectured many a time on the self-governing community of the Panchayats which, of course, are the ancient Hindu village councils. These institutions, she said, should be restored all over. Once she had made efforts to introduce them in Bihar, and she had the honour of being elected President of the new Panchayat Association. But India is too big a country for any social reformer to bring changes over-night, but Annie certainly gave a fillip and incentive to all these schemes long before the Indian National Congress thought of talking about that.

Education was still a paramount concern of Mrs. Annie Besant, and she was trying hard to build up a Theosophical Education Trust under the supervision of Ernest Wood. Her Girls' School at Benares, Anglo-Sanskrit High School at Bankipur, Sanatana Dharma High School at Bhavanagar, Theosophical High School at Kanpur, and of course the national High School at Madanapalle, which was on the verge of becoming a second-grade college, were the flourishing institutions. The Governor of Madras, Lord Pentland, opened the new College at Madanapalle in the presence of Mrs. Besant. The Theosophical Education Trust had 37 affiliated schools under it. The Hindu University Bill was passed in October 1915, and thus the whole scheme turned out to have been a magnificent achievement of Mrs. Besant in India. So the base that Annie Besant had built to become an Indian National leader was in every way strong and ever-lasting. In fact, she was the last of the great social reformers among the Europeans in India, and it can even be added that she was the greatest ever.

When said that Annie Besant and Mohandas Gandhi were together on their way to politics, one should not misunderstand them that they had agreed to get into the field together . It was not so! All that had happened was sheer accidental. Annie, after the case against her, that went even up to the Privy Council in England, had come up to victorious, but after a lot of 'tussle and tumble'. She thought that she needed an additional and all pervading role to play effectively in India and for India. Therefore, she took to politics in 1914. She was then 67.

As to Gandhi, it was already seen that he was keen on returning to India. He wound up his South African establishments after he came out victorious in his agitation there against the Government. He had dreamt to serve India, 'the country where the greatest spiritual treasures were to be found for the comforting and uplifting the whole world'. That was how he found India. He had, by that time, had already made a name for himself in South Africa. Now he thought that it was opportune that he get into Indian politics, and, therefore, he left South Africa. He was then 45.

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So it was just a coincidence that both Annie and Gandhi were in the same field in the same year working and agitating for the same cause.

Among these two great 'Indians', it was Annie who stood head and shoulders higher than Gandhi in spite of the latter's South African laurels. But before one could think that way, one should remove from one's mind the obvious prejudice of Annie being a white woman and a Britisher, of course, of the Irish stock. But in her spiritual, personal, cultural and scholarly eminence, sincerity and integrity, she was second to none in the world. The Rt. hon'ble V.S.Srinivasa Sastri, one of her great contemporaries and equally a great orator, said about her that: [11]

> "Annie believed in her heart of hearts, that she belonged in her spirit and by her soul to this country, ~~[illegible]~~ that its culture, religion and philosophy belonged to her, and that in future she would be born in this country to learn that culture, to spread that philosophy, to teach that religion. To her it was the greatest ambition to be known as an Indian, to be recognised in every home as an Indian---------."

That was true! In every home she wanted to be recognised as an Indian and, indeed, Indians too in return, heard and respected her, but it seemed that the Indian leaders, ~~[illegible]~~ perhaps, thought that she was a rival to them.

It was also clear when the writers of the so called history of the Indian National Congress, who were just the Congress backbenchers and hirelings, took to write the Congress history on the basis of the records left by Annie Besant herself, and then made every effort to play down or ignore the lofty role played by this great woman. The Indian character is that they like to blow their own trumpets however shrill the sound may be.

It was in 1913, Annie pledged her life to the freedom of her adopted country although she was all the time busy on educational, religious and cultural revival of the country. The case against her by the father of Krishnamurthi and Nityananda, was to say the least unfair and uncharitable, but ingratitude of those Brahmin instigators showed itself. But Annie blasted those Madras Brahmins and came out triumphantly from the highest court of the British empire. After that she decided to reinvigorate the Congress Organization which was founded thirty years prior to her launching the Home Rule movement. The histiry of Congress makes us understand that: [12]

> "Great institutions have always had small beginnings even as the great rivers start as thin streams--------Its doors were thrown open to every class of citizens and to every grade of society. Though in the beginning it fought shy of problems that were described as SOCIAL, yet in the fulness of time it recognised no such ~~[illegible]~~ compartmentalism of life."

Annie Besant's experience as a journalist, social reformer etc while in England in her early days stood her in good stead to carry on her dynamic work that she relentlessly did. With Charles Bradlaugh, she wrote profusely in NATIONAL REFORMER and later became its sub-editor and co-editor. She also worked in THE LINK in 1888, that was

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[11] B.R.Nanda on Gandhi- Page 152,
[12] Pattabhi Sitaramayya- History of Congress,

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started with humanitarian ideals by William Stead and others. In India she ran the Theosophical bulletins like the THEOSOPHIST, ADYAR BULLETIN etc with great success. But now, as she plunged into politics, she launched her first political newspaper called THE COMMONWEAL, and its first issue came out on the 2nd January 1914.

Mrs. Besant was not satisfied with those newspapers that were already there. In order to make her political crusade more effective she thought that she was in need of a stronger weapon, and it was then she founded her famous NEW INDIA. She bought the press and the paper of THE MADRAS STANDARD, which was the oldest in Madras, founded in 1841. She undertook to build it up as 'the largest Anglo-Indian newspaper of the time' with a circulation of about 30,000 in 1914-15. Her partner in this new venture was the wealthy Paarsee Theosophist, and the manager of the Theosophical Publishing House, B.P.Wadia, who was the sub-Editor of THE COMMONWEAL. But Mrs. Besant took the sole proprietorship of the presses and she herself was the editor and the entire runner of the show.

Thus, fully equipped, Mrs. Besant was in the political arena of the country. Having got down to the field, she wanted some loyal soldiers to fight her war in addition to the thousands whom she had already gathered as a religious leader and social reformer. Anyway she searched for talents and she found one right there. Prof. Nethercot wrote that:

> "-------Ramaswami Iyer was still wrapped up in 'childish vanity' over his victory; she had to come to him and said with frank generousity that he had 'fought a clean fight'. 'Will you come and join me to work for India's uplift?' she said, and the young man was flattered and dazzled. Moreover, he believed in her purpose and character. He agreed to join her in her battle for Indian independence- for what came to be known as Home Rule for India."

That was how Annie mustered talents even if the talented were her opponents in other ways. Ramaswami Iyer was one such opponent of hers in the case which she fought and won splendidly. Now she was determined to fight for the country with all sincerity and thus add up to her prestige, and that was a challenging task of hers. Many people supported her stand, many followed her and many admired her- both in India and England. One of them was George Lansbury, a labour member of the Parliament. "If Mrs. Besant wanted self-Government for India, Lansbury knew that he must work for it,too!" 13.

When Annie went to Europe in 1913, she carried with her the Home Rule slogan for the first time across the seas, and there she pleaded in her usual way with the British Government to consider India's claims. There were many people to listen to her speeches on the subject about which she spoke thirty years prior to that with Charles Bradlaugh. In those days, Sir Octavian Hume's efforts to stir the country for independence echoed in India as well as England through the voices of Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant. All that was old story, and the method that Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant had adopted for their social and political agitations, was much older than any Indian Congressman had hardly imagined in those days. All their struggle in England went on exactly on the pattern of non-violent non-cooperation, but sternly active, and never passive. They treated their opponents as

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13. Prof. Nethercot on Annie Besant, Page 216.

as friends and they never did anything behind the backs of their opponents or of the Government. They used to first inform their course of action to the authorities, and they had always surrendered themselves to selfless service and suffering. What after all was the method, over and above this, was shown to the world by the rest of the people who came after Charles Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant, both steadfast fighters against oppression and injustice.

With Bradlaugh gone long back, Annie was in politics again after about twenty years in 1913, but not in England. She was in India. She studied the situation of the country, mastered the Indian ethics, scriptures and philosophy, toured and lectured all over the country many times and knew the masses thoroughly well. Her writings revealed the depth of her knowledge of Indian history and Indian problems. In her essay on: SHALL INDIA REMAIN A NATION, she wrote that: 14.

> "Through all the integrations and disintegrations of States there was one powerful unifying force ever at work- the Hindu religion. The recitation of the daily MANTHRAMs linked in the worshippers' mind the cities, rivers and mountains of North, South, East and West. Traditions of great Rishis, common Vedas and Puraanas and epics, songs of saintly devotees, a sacred language for the daily prayers, made all Hindus One People, one Nation, permeated by one Faith. The coming of the Islam weakened the sense of Nationality, but also enriched the National life when Muslims became Indians, and not foreign invaders. But disintegrating influences wrought powerfully, sects multiplied, casts meant for mutual service became enclosures for antagonistic privileges and the consciousness of Nationality lessened-------."

Annie's spirited writings were as much moving as her spirited speeches. Continuing in the same tone, she proceeded saying that:

> "Britain conquered by turning Indian swords against Indians and, having conquered, proceeded to treat them all with an enveloping contempt as 'natives', and created a unity of servitude. In this atmosphere the seed of Nationality, left from the past unity, began to grow, and common humiliation generated a common sympathy. Since Bengalee, Punjabi, Mahratta, Madrassi, were all branded with a common inferiority, their differences almost disappeared, and they began to realise their one-ness. Indian history stretched back into the past; it did not begin with Clive and Hastings. There were battles before Plassey; there were Maharanis before Queen Victoria; there were scriptures before the Bible. From their past they drank strength; self-respect and pride awakened; they began to feel their Nationahood; they answered appeals to the service of India--------."

That was the way Annie addressed to her own people, the British, to look upon India with grace, compassion and dignity, and not with arrogance. Being a foreign lady she had to first appeal to the Indian masses about her own integrity and sincerity which she abundantly possessed. Even then there were many who cherished a sort of jealousy towards her profound learning of the Vedic classics and for her Indian nationalism, and those were of course the Brahmins, and a few of her political opponents like Dr. T.M.Nair of Madras. But the more these people betrayed their jealousy against her lofty personality the more loftier she grew year by year, and that was Madame Annie Besant.

Together with her national education, cultural revival and woman's suffrage movements, Annie added the HOME RULE movement also into her national programme, after being

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14. 'The Besant Spirit'- Vol. 3, Pages 49 & 50.

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inspired by the Irish Home Rule movement. She directed her attention to 'the problem of building up the empire by a federation of self-governing nations'. She thought how the Government of India must be altered to fit into such a federation. "All these things, of course, bore on the matter of the movements, which were already on foot for bringing about either complete or partial Indian independence". Thus started Annie's Home Rule movement. It was said, that: I5.

> "Indian politics, which seemed so stagnant---------were stirred so deeply by the Home Rule movement. Its founder was Mrs. Annie Besant, who had carved for herself a unique position in India's public life. A leader of the Theosophical movement, and one of the foremost educationists in the country, she had completely identified herself with India."

As a national leader, Annie had once presided over a Muslim meeting "to oppose the injustices and defects of a new Medical Registration Bill for the city of Madras" where she did some effective service by taking the matter to the proper quarters. Within a year of her joining politics, Annie was considered as in the forefront of the Indian political movement. When she came to the country twenty years before that she had not even dreamt of being a political leader, but now the Indian situation forced her to be one.

One of the very first tasks that she had undertaken after getting into politics was to unite the various political groups of the country. At that time, within the Congress, there were two prominent groups called- moderates and extremists. Mrs. Besant came in close contact in I9I4 with the Maharashtrian leaders. Gopalakrishna Gokhale, 47, an ardent theosophist, moderate, cool, intelligent and an ex-professor, earned her esteem. She made him the leader of her Home Rule party. At the same time, Gokhale's SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY that was founded in I905, had already become a sugnificant organization in the country, and as a prominent leader, Gokhale had already contributed much for the national emergence. He was also of the opinion that "England's rule over India was for the latter's general good".

Another Maharashtrian leader was Bal Gangadhar Tilak, 57, the first political prisoner of the modern times, an ex-professor of mathematics, the editor of the MAHRATTA and KESARI journals, an advocate of violence and extremist, an orthodox Hindu and, of course, a nationalist. It should be here noted that Tilak too preached that, "Emancipation could only come to the country through the spread of English education."

Therefore, the modern anti-English nationalists and misguided enthusiasts should go back to the earlier leaders of the country to know how their elders had visualised a great future for the country. Everyone of them had spoken in one voice that English language, English education and administration had been a boon to the country. Raja Ramamohan Roy, Syed Ahmad Khan, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Dadabhai Naoroji, Sir Phirozshah Mehta, Sir Badruddin Tyabji, Surendranath Benerjie, Gopalakrishna Gokhale and Bal Gangadhar Tilak- have all spoken with such warmth and feeling in support of the English edu-

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I5. B.R.Nanda on Gandhi- Page I50.

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education and Western civilization. What happened after those men had left, one will have to presently see. Annie Besant's reunification programme of the divided groups soon after her entry to politics, was described by a recent political historian as under: 16.

"Annie Besant, President of the Theosophical Society, editor of the COMMONWEAL and NEW INDIA, prolific writer, indomitable reformer, a woman of remarkable intellect, talent and energy, joined the Congress and immediately addressed herself to the task of trying to help negotiate the reunification (of the Congress) in 1914. She wrote to Gokhale that 'Mr. Tilak has formally declared for self-Government within empire', and invited both Tilak and Gokhale to Poona for the mediation between them'. The moderate Gokhale had already informed Mrs. Besant 'not to interfere' because he thought that it would encourage the extremist Tilak 'to raise his terms'."

Mrs. Besant, in the meantime, had found ~~ex~~ out that, 'Tilak's views can only be carried out by a revolution'. However, she pledged herself to propose a Congress constitutional amendment before the subjects' Committee at the ensuing Madras sessions. When Mrs. Besant's Home Rule slogan was spreading everywhere, Tilak wrote in August 1914, stating that: 17.

"I may state once for all that we are trying in India, as the Irish Home Rulers have been doing in Ireland, for a reform of the system of administration and not for the overthrow of the Government."

In 1914, a deputation of a few nationalists went to England to plead for India's cause. Mrs. Besant and Gokhale headed the party. Others in the group were Lala Lajpat Rai, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Sankaran Nair and Mrs. Sarojini Naidu. After going there, Gokhale fell ill at his Twickenham residence, and Mrs. Besant called on him 'to express her sympathy and also profit from his advice'. ~~It~~ Amongst the members of the deputation, only Mrs. Besant was the moving force while the rest of them went hither and thither, probably for sight-seeing. They behaved just as subjects of an imperial power, and it was only Annie who talked as an equal with the elite of the country. She wrote articles on India's cause in THE TIMES, THE DAILY CHRONICLE, THE DAILY NEWS etc, and all those papers welcomed her writings. She had many English friends to work for her and on behalf of her in London.

The Indian members of the delegation, however, moved about well-dressed in Western style with necktie and cocky caps and hats on. In all this even Gokhale was not lagging behind, according to the photographs taken on the occasion and published later in the biographies of those people. They talked about India only at their business meetings but it was Mrs. Besant who organised meetings for them with her colleagues, friends and officials of the British Government. The Indians were found good in fault-finding and mud-slinging, and in that they would not spare even Mrs. Besant if she unwittingly committed any slight mistake either in her speeches or writings. An Anglo-India, Cornelia Sorobji, attacked her once saying that 'these Americanised Hindus are clever enough to apply modern interpretations to the age-old Eastern laws.!

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16. Stanley A.Wolpert on 'Tilak and Gokhale'- Page 267,
17. " " " " " 265.

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Having known the Indians and Hindus very well for years, Mrs. Besant was magnanimous enough to ignore such sarcasms. ~~NEW~~ Her FRIENDS OF INDIA association in London consisted of many Britishers and they held an 'At Home' for these Indian visitors who went on delegation at the new Theosophical Society headquarters.

As the first World War had then started, Mrs. Besant and others of the delegation returned India, and during the war she spent most of her time in India alone, while one of the members of the delegation, took it as an opportunity to conduct a world tour, and from England, he proceeded to America and stayed there till the war ended, and he was Lala Lajpat Rai. That was the way of those Indian 'nationalists'. Annie Besant after her return to India, toured all over the country many times from Kashmir to Cape Comorin, and roused the nation to wake up. In the magazine THEOSOPHIST, she wrote that the conflict in Europe must result at least in the formation of a Council of United States of Europe. This was an idea worth pondering even now ~~xxxx~~ after seventy years of Annie's prophetic utterances.

She also wrote profusely during those days on national and religious issues. She was first to draft an authentic History of Congress, and serialised it in her journal-COMMONWEAL, entitled 'How India Wrought for Freedom'. She gave life and blood to the song VANDE MATARAM, or 'Mother, I Bow Down to Thee'. To rouse young Indians, she organised the Young Men's Indian Association, in Madras in 1914. She ceaselessly wrote articles both in India and foreign papers on 'Self-Government to India', when the British Government found in her articles in NEW INDIA, 'a tendency to excite dissatisfaction'. I8.

A contemporary of Mrs. Besant who had heard her speaking many a time, wrote that it was Annie who 'roused Madras from its torpor'. Both she and Wadia were powerful writers, and with them there were P.K.Telang, Charles Andrews and A.B.Hornimann of Bombay. Among other young men of the time, Sanjiva Rao and Shiva Rao, the Benegal brothers, who were the graduates of the Central Hindu College, Sri Prakasa, son of Dr. Bhagavan Das and Bishop Leadbeater, were there. The policy of the paper NEW INDIA of Mrs. Besant, was said thus: I9.

> "The policy-------is to embody the ideal of self-Government for India along the Colonial lines-------under the educative guidance and control of the British statesmanship until colonial autonomy is attained,-------May NEW INDIA embody the true spirit of nationalism".

This was Annie Besant, the lady, who kept the extremists, anarchists and the violent mobs at a distance and gave them a refined concept of constitutional agitation in the tradition of the founding fathers of the Indian National Congress. The earlier stalwarts of the Congress were no more there and the Organization seemed to have been brought up in the extremist 'Shivaji and Peshwa tradition', and that was how it looked when several extremists stood in line to create chaos!

I8. Prof. Nethercot on Annie- Pages 224,225 & 232,
I9. K.P.S.Menon & Prof. Nethercot.

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CHAPTER VI.

INDIAN NATIONALISM IN NEW LIGHT.

The annual Congress session of December 1914 was held in Madras, and it was presided over by Sir Bhupendranath Basu. As usual the pavilion was decorated with portraits of their Imperial Majesties and the Royal Arms. When the proceedings were on, the Governor of Madras, paid a visit to the assembly, and he was greeted with loud cheers. The scene was described thus: 1

> "There was an unusual torrent of speeches. The flow of oratory was suddenly interrupted by an unusual event---------We saw a thin figure, perfectly dressed, walking up to the platform with ADC's and being received with the highest respect by the President of the Congress. It was Lord Pentland, Governor of Madras,. Surendranath Benerjie, the orator, was called upon to move a resolution affirming the loyalty of India to the British Crown. The whole incident showed the spirit of the time, The Congress had not yet become an implacable opponent of foreign rule; it was a meek but dignified suppliant for increased self-Government."

The Governor's visit was meant as a special gesture of goodwill to the Indian nation. There was a reason for this gesture. The war was on. India had been making a vital contribution to victory, and Indian soldiers had been fighting magnificently on all fronts. It was, therefore, in the interests of Great Britain to have Indians firmly on her side.

During this Madras Congress sessions, Tilak was in the background due to his own reasons. Gokhale was sick though not bed-ridden. Sir Phirozshah Mehta was old and he was not there. Surendranath Benerjie introduced a resolution pleading for full measures of reform towards the attainment of self-Government. This was seconded by Annie Besant who said that 'as perhaps the most momentous that had ever been laid before the Congress during the thirty years of its splendid existence'. 2.

'The price of India's loyalty is India's freedom'. 'The moment of England's difficulty is the moment of India's opportunity'. These were the slogans of Annie Besant during those days of war. She said so in England, and again now at the Congress sessions. Lajpat Rai and Muhammad Ali Jinnah supported her views all along. She tried to bring together the moderates and the extremists at this Madras Congress, but Sir Phirozshah Mehta had warned her against the admission of Tilak with his 'firebrands'into the Congress camp. Tilak's extremism did not find support anywhere in the country in those days. At the Congress sessions, Mrs. Besant declared that:

> "India does not chaffer with the blood of her sons and the proud tears of our daughters in exchange for so much liberty, so much right. India claims the right as a nation to justice among the peoples of the empire. India asked for this before the war; India will ask for it after the war, but not as a reward but as a right does she ask for it. On that there must be no mistake."

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1. K.P.N. Menon- 'Many Worlds'- Page 44,
2. G.D.Tendulkar- 'Mahatma'- Vol. I.

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Annie's attempts to patch up the differences between the contending groups, were not successful. When an Englishman suggested to her that 'the Indian National Congress could do no more patriotic a thing than dissolve itself, and no longer set as a disturbing element during the war', she contemptuously rejected the idea and worked steadfastly to vitalise the Organization. In that way it was from her whole-hearted dedication to the cause of India and Indian nationalism, the Indian politics took a new patriotic twist and saw a new light; and, that light was quite different from what Sir Octavian Hume had afforded to the country thirty-five years prior to that.

Annie had a fine record of national service in India beginning from 1893, when she first appeared at the Madras Congress sessions, a few months later in 1894. Her message to the people of India sounded more exhilerating than that of Allan O. Hume or Swami Vivekananda. She said, that: 3.

"India's salvation depends on herself--------and, you, my brothers, are responsible for your own land--------Do not imagine that because you are not learned--------you cannot influence people--------You can, because they see your life---------It is not words, it is life that affects people."

A Gandhian biographer wrote about Annie, that: 4.

"Mrs. Besant was a genius for propaganda and organization, and that helped her in raising the political barometer. George Bernard Shaw, who had known her in his youth, had once remarked that she was capable of bearing the burden of three men. A great organiser, an eloquent speaker and a forthright writer, she quickened the political consciousness of the educated class."

Here it would be relevant to quote the history of Congress that was got written by the Congressmen of the 1930s, which said about Annie's role in the Indian politics from the year 1914, that:

"From 1910 to 1915, Congress was merely marking time. No material changes however took place. When the Great War broke out in 1914, and Mrs. Besant inaugurated her great political movement, it was done under the auspices of the All India Home Rule League-------."

'Home-Rule' has been Annie's catch-phrase from as early as 1909, and she had been dinning those words to the ears of the British Government whenever she visited England, and by 1914, these words echoed all over India. When she started her Home Rule League, many people responded to her call, and the most significant among them was 'Sir Subramanya Iyer who should have presided over the Congress in 1899. But he was unable to do so as he was made a judge of the High Court. Later, in 1914, he reverted to the Congress and during the Home Rule agitation of Mrs. Besant, he surrendered his knighthood'. The History of Congress, said in continuation, that: 5.

"Mrs. Besant, however, did not place the Indian problem on the basis of reward, but on the basis of right. She boldly demanded the application of the principle of reciprocity at the Madras Congress of 1914 urging that India should exclude imports from countries from which her people were excluded. Mrs. Besant inaugurated her great Home Rule movement during the days of Lord Pentland. The same old programme was revived- SWADESHI, boycott of foreign goods, national education and Home Rule."

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3. Annie- the Autobiography- the 1939 Ed.,
4. B.R.Nanda on Gandhi, Page 151,
5. Pattabhi Sitaramayya- History of Congress, Pages 63 & 76.

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From this it is clear that those programmes which the Congressmen of the Gandhian times were talking about were already introduced long back before 1915, though the agitation was not as intensive as it was after a few years. Mrs. Besant's vigorous drive and force that she lent to her activities beginning from religion to politics, was said in these terms, in the official history of the Congress: 6.

> "When Mrs. Besant jumped from Theosophy and the High Court where she had to face a litigation relating to Jiddu Krishnamurthi and his brother, to the Congress and the spacious atmosphere of the Beach (in Madras), she brought new ideas, new talents, new resources and altogether a new method of organization and a new outlook into the field of Congress. She was already a world character and had millions of followers in the East and the West, in the new hemisphere as well as the old. No wonder then that with this mighty following and with her inexhaustible energy, she gave a new life to Indian politics."

In spite of a galaxy of great leaders in India during the first thirty years after the Congress organization was founded, there was no one to give a dynamic outlook to the agitation till a Mrs. Besant emerged. The Hindu bigots, together with THE HINDU daily of Madras, who indulged in vicious propaganda against the lady, also did nothing till then. The authenticated history of the Indian National Congress said, that:

> "India was then a nation whose cause went unheeded and a whole leader remained yet to be found. It was at such a juncture that Mrs. Besant stepped into the trench. She jumped from religion to politics, and from Theosophy to Home Rule. She started a daily, NEW INDIA, and a weekly- THE COMMONWEAL. She was the first to popularise the cry of HOME RULE and she carried ~~thereby~~ on a raging, tearing, propaganda."

This statement that came from the higher quarters, testify to Annie's great pioneering work in this country and, in fact, it was she who afforded a new twist as well as a new light to the Indian nationalism. According to the above authoritative versions, it is evident that Annie Besant was i) the leader the country found in the right time ii) who stepped into the trench iii) who first started political newspapers in the country and, iv) was the first to popularise the cry of HOME RULE in the country. At the Madras sessions of the Indian National Congress in December 1914, it was said that Mrs. Besant brought a new spirit and dynamism to the country and to the National Organization.

Gandhi had intended to be present at the Congress sessions of December 1914, but he could not reach India on time. He had left England on the second week of that month and was still on the high seas. Even then the Congress placed on record 'its warm appreciation of admiration for the heroic endeavour of Mr. Gandhi and his followers (in South Africa), and their unparallelled sacrifice and suffering in their struggle for the maintenance of self respect of India and the redress of Indian grievances." 7.

Annie Besant was trying to spur 'her fellow citizens to a greater degree of self-consciousness. Indeed that was one of her greatest contribution to India. Prof. Methercot recollects that:

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6. Pattabhi Sitaramayya- History of Congress, Page 119 & 125,
7. G.D.Tendulkar- 'Mahatma'- Vol. I.

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"When the Madras Committee, ~~xxxxxx~~ aroused by the mistreatment of Indians in South Africa, and by the persecution and valiant efforts of Gandhi there to secure their 'elementary rights' as citizens, called a protest meeting, she was one of those asked to speak on the subject."

No doubt, Annie's speech struck the hearts of the entire India and of the Indian Government. Gandhi's ship, in the meantime, was nearing the Indian shores now. As he was aboard the ship, he was conscious of the fact that he was returning to his country after winning laurels as a fighter against a mighty Government in a different country. On the ship, as he usually did, he changed his English costume to Indian dress with a long Marwari shirt, Kathiawada turban, a coarse DHOTI etc. With that he bade good-bye to his anglicised costumes, full length suits, necktie, bow-tie, felt hat etc. Kasturibai looked fine and plumpy with a spotted white saree with one end of it over her head.

Gandhi returned to his home country after twenty years of stay outside India although he had been visiting India once in every three or four years. After that with what depth and lucidity he contemplated over the affairs in the long-term interest of the whole country, is not clear. A 45-year old man, a successful agitator and a shrewd politician, must have brooded over the things. The day after he landed in India, there was a meeting in his honour of the Gujaratis of Bombay. On that occasion, Gandhi seemed to have put before them one of his pet themes, that INDIANS SHOULD USE AMONG THEMSELVES ONE OF THEIR OWN LANGUAGES INSTEAD OF ENGLISH. 8

With this began Gandhi's first retrogade step. He started politicking right away with language forgetting that India was a country of not only his Gujarati language but scores of other languages as well. He was an English educated man. To acquire that education, he broke his family and caste traditions and went to England and, later on, he even desired to stay on in England finding the atmosphere conducive for a good living. Whatever might have been the ways of the English rulers, the English language had become an important link in Indian education and communication system for over 150 years. Why then did Gandhi start this politics with poor language. He spoke only in his Gujarati or Hindi in Madras, Calcutta, Kanpur and Rameshwaram. Thus what he sowed ~~xx~~ on the very next day of his coming to the country was reaped exactly after forty years in 1955 when the country was broken linguistically.

Gandhi fought in South Africa on different grounds, but why then in India did he start the linguistic holocaust without actually settling himself to fight for Home Rule or SWARAJ? A politician could exploit many things, and language is the one which could be handy to play fool with, and Gandhi did it.

Gandhi also knew that Annie Besant and a few elderly politicians had been speaking only in English, and that they could not reach the uneducated mass. In order to see that he out-did Annie Besant in reaching the masses with his Gujarati or Hindi language, this 'wizard came across the seas'. Gandhi seemed to have failed to realise that a ~~xx~~

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8. Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi- Vol. 13.
(Italics- this author's)

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a multi-national and multi-linguistic country which never had a unified existence till the British came, was bound together at that time only by English language.

Another move of Gandhi was his eagerness to see the Governor of Bombay, Lord Willingdon. He seemed to have been anxious to get round as many places and to as many men as possible before he could at least reach his home town. He thought that with all his antecedents he could take the country with him all at once and start taking to politics as a regular avocation.

After the introductory meeting between the Governor and Gandhi, the latter was told by Governor Willingdon, that: 'You may come to me whenever you like, and you will see that my Government does not wilfully do anything wrong'. Gandhi replied: 'It is that faith that sustains me'. This same Willingdon became the Viceroy of India after about fifteen years.

Here one should recollect Gopalakrishna Gokhale's role in public life. He was an institution by himself. A young brilliant professor and nationalist, he was in the all India limelight even before he was thirty years old. A man of stern discipline and high moral calibre, Gokhale was a disciple of Justice Ranade. He founded the SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY in 1905 with an aim of spiritualising political life in India. Basically a man of religion, he admired everything that was ~~da~~ good in man. Naturally he regarded Gandhi as a man of the future. At the annual Congress sessions of 1909, Gokhale had paid high tributes to Gandhi stating that: 'Indian humanity has reached its high water-mark' in Gandhi.

This showed that Gandhi had profoundly impressed one and all by his saintly life, purity of thought and selfless service. In politics and as a politician, however, Gandhi had some queer ideas but all that was ignored when he was found as a man of Truth, Justice, non-Violenece and so on. Though Gokhale had high opinion of Gandhi, there was no evidence to say whether he had agreed with Gandhi's politics. Gokhale and Gandhi had met for the first time in Poona in 1896, then in Calcutta in 1901, in Bombay in 1906, in South Africa in 1912, in London in 1914 and lastly in Bombay in January 1915. One wise note of caution that Gokhale, a man only three years senior to Gandhi, had given to this 'wizard' was that in the event of his plunging into Indian politics, he should first study the national situation at least for a year and then take up to active work.

So far so good between these two men. It seemed as though that their mutual respect and admiration were just personal. In the political level Gokhale had his own reservations on Gandhi's methods and approach to problems. Gandhi had considered Gokhale as his GURU, but how far did the GURU approve of the politics of his SHISHYA, was the unanswered question. What was only clear about them was that both of them were the national stalwarts in ethical fibre and moral calibre, and the country respected Gokhale in those days while Mohandas Gandhi had not yet figured high in the national politics.

With all this there is one black scar that one could see in the brilliant career of Gokhale. He had known Annie Besant for over fifteen years now, and talked to her many times at Poona, Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta and for the last time in London in 1914. He had known her spirit of service, dedication to duty, sacrifice, eminence etc. In fact, Gokhale was also a Theosophist in a way and his SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY was founded by the inspiration that he derived from Annie's activities. His high sounding speeches at the Central Assembly and elsewhere on the compulsory primary education and other subjects were also inspired by the educational activities that were carried on by Annie Besant. With all this, Gokhale did not seem to have had the heart of offering tributes or encouraging words to the efforts of that gallant lady who was the storm centre of Indian public life, especially in the field of education, religion and culture. How did Gokhale forget to publicly acknowledge Annie's services to the country? Why did Indians, especially the Brahmins, always betray their ingratitude? Why were they sceptical towards everything foreign, foreigner, or woman and so on? Anyway Gokhale departed much too early without remaining to answer this question! He died unexpectedly on the 19th February 1915. Gandhi was then on tour and he hurried back to the funeral. Bal Gangadhar Tilak's funeral oration was as good as his extremism. He said that:

> "This is not a time for cheers. This is a time for shedding tears. This diamond of India, the jewel of Maharashtra, this prince of workers, is laid to rest on the funeral ground. Look at him and try to emulate him."

And, for Gandhi, as he put it later on:

> "Tilak was like the Himalayas- great, lofty, unapproachable; Gokhale was like the holy Ganga in which one could confidently take a plunge."

So with Gokhale gone, and Tilak and other elderly politicians getting older, Gandhi was the next senior politician with a reputation of his South African adventure. But people had not seen him. Before he could start going round the country in order to study the situation at first hand as per Gokhale's advice, he thought of practising some self-denying exercises. He decided to take decisive steps to shape the conduct of his life. He discarded the sacred thread which was just a symbol of distinction or discrimination from among the deprived fellow citizens. He had a tuft of hair in the middle of the head and the rest he shaved. On the lines of the Phoenix in the Tolstoy Farm, he founded an ASHRAM near Ahmadabad on the banks of the Sabramati river.

Thus Gandhi dedicated himself for the cause of motherland. Deeper in the heart of India, he saw the picture that was grim and depressing. The situation of the rural India was just atagnation and agony. People simply suffered with smiles on their lips, bore the taxation and humiliation, rather helplessly. For all that the Government of the day was blamed. Those first batch of senior nationalists were all full of praise for the British rule because they were all witnesses for an entire era of changes in the country, and they desired the British administration to continue but with more and more reforms and developments in every aspect of Indian life.

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But all ~~that~~ intentions and aspirations were given a new twist with the emergence of Annie Besant with her slogan of HOME RULE, and that was no small demand at that time. That was certainly revolutionary and that really 'electrified' India.

But some people in India seemed to have felt that they needed a SWADESHI brand of nationalist. All along they had been hearing the modern educated giants among nationalists who dressed glamorously and spoke from the high pulpits during the annual sessions thunderously, and none of them had gone or seen the rural parts. They were all city-bred wealthy men and those Europeans like Hume, Yule, Annie and others who had initiated the nationalist movement in the country were all of 'foreign make'. Therefore, people had felt that the time had now come ~~exhausted~~ to have a leader of Gandhi's reputation. And, Gandhi showed himself to the people with as much simplicity as possible. He toured only in the third-class train, never took to politics, rejected requests from the Congress camp to take to some organizational work, dressed as a simple farmer, talked in his own language, either Gujarati or Hindi, and strictly adhered to those ancient ethics.

Thus Gandhi was on the move from place to place and from city to city studying the situation of the country in the very first years of his landing in India, and in accordance with the late Gokhale's wishes. He was accompanied by Kasturibai in his tour, and at places where parties were got up in their honour, Gandhi would praise Kasturibai as 'a helpful partner', while she would say nothing. It was said, that: 9.

> "Many of his admirers were disappointed. They expected an epic warrior, larger than life. They saw a slight figure, not above average height, with projecting ears and a floppy turban. His voice lacked resonance. It stirred the Transval audiences when it carried a message, but now its power was checked by the handicap of having nothing to say."

Gandhi had no consistent opinion on Indian problems during his first two or three years in India. In Africa he had fought on different platforms and for different purposes whereas that was not so in India. So it was good that he kept quiet during his tour. He had also owed that he would not start any passive resistance movement in India till he studied things for himself. When some senior Congressmen urged him to talk during the Congress session in 1915, Gandhi declined, and said that he did not wish to step in at the moment and that he would wait for the right time to come. He was, perhaps, thinking to give a new vigour to the old Organization and thus shake off its lethargy. During his tour, Gandhi met many leading people all over the country. He saw the poet Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Munshiram, later Swami Shraddhananda. Explaining about the objectives of the newly founded Sabarmati Ashram in May 1915, on the Phoenix tradition, it was said, that: 10.

> "It was intended to be a centre for training dedicated servants of the Nation------ ------The disciplines the inmates were subject to themselves are set out-------to cover the different spheres of life- social, economic, religious and educational."

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9. Jeoffry Ashe on Gandhi.
10. Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi- Vol. 13.

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Gandhi's thinking to dabble with the hope of improving the system of education even in the very first year of his coming to India, seemed to have been just another carbon copy of Mrs. Besant's national educational scheme. Even then Gandhi was no educationist like Mrs. Besant, to deal with or even think of the subject. He was only a clever but honest lawyer whereas Mrs. Besant was an honours graduate in Science with the experience of teaching and in administration at the Board of London Education Borough. Gandhi's idea of education reform and his motive to indulge in the subject was centred around his prejudice to the English education, and also his urge to out-do Mrs. Besant in that field. That was Number Two of Gandhi's politics. It was said, that: 11.

> "It was, however, the problem of education which exercised him most; it is pre-eminently as an educationist that he appears in this Volume (of his biography). Gandhi saw that if India was to remain herself and retain her creative vitality, the education system would have to be radically recast so as to reduce the emphasis on book learning and dethrone English from the central position it had usurped."

But in those days, or even these days, people seldom understood minds and motives of the politicians because the latter know that it is a special brand of people they were talking to. Gandhi had been known well by name in cities like Calcutta and Madras from where a large number of men went to South Africa. In that way he found himself at home at some places during his tour when 'travelling like a poor peasant, indistinguishable from all other poor peasants on the train, he would sometimes arrive at his destination unrecognised. When he came to Madras in April 1915, the welcomming Committee searched through the first and second class carriages and found him at last at the very end of the train looking thin and emaciated, wearing a ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ loose shirt and trousers stained with dust of four days' travelling. There were cries of 'LONG LIVE MR. AND MRS. GANDHI'- and, later students pulled the carriage of Gandhi in triumph through the streets. In his speech in Madras, Gandhi said: "Madras opened its doors to him for the indentured labourers in South Africa, mostly came from South India. Addressing to the Bar Association, he said that: 12.

> "I discovered that the British empire had certain ideals with which I have fallen in love, and one of those ideals is that every subject of the British empire has the free scope possible for his energies and efforts, and whatever he thinks is due to his conscience---------I feel as you perhaps have known that I am no lover of any Government, and I have more than ones said that Government is best which governs least".

In Madras an address was presented to Gandhi on the 21st April 1915, by the Indian South African League, and that was read by G.A.Natesan, a host of Gandhi. Sir S. Subramania Iyer, a retired judge, and also a Theosophist, presided over the occasion. Mrs. Besant, Tyabji and Srinivasa Sastri, were also presnt. Speaking on the occasion, Gandhi said that:

> "It was in 1896 that I found in Mr. Gokhale my RAJYA GURU (cheers) and it was in the same year that I found in Madras, as I did not find in any other place, that

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11. Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi- Vol. 13,
12. Robert Payne on Gandhi- Page 293,

deep abiding sense of religion--------As I have said so many times, India has been still suffering under the hypnotic influence produced upon it by that great saintly politician, Mr. Gokhale (cheers)."

Gandhi visited Adyar, and there he had tea with Annie Besant and addressed a meeting under the banyan tree. He went round the Theosophical Society estate, printing press etc and expressed his satisfaction for the work they were doing. He also visited the Panchama School and other institutions founded by Col. Henry Olcott and Annie Besant. So far so good! Gandhi's name and fame had become legendary all over, that a gentleman who was present at one of the Madras meetings, described scene thus: I3.

"The meeting which Gandhi addressed was different from any other I had attended. It was not held in the hall such as the YMCA or the YMIA; it was held in the open, in the courtyard of the Christian College. Every doorway, every window, every branch of a tree was occupied. There was an air of tense expectation, for the lecturer had already become a legend as a result of his struggle against the entrenched racialism, in South Africa. He arrived looking thin, almost emaciated. He was dressed simply but elegantly. He spoke for exactly an hour. His speech too, was unlike any other I had heard. There was no tricks of oratory, no purple patches, no satire. It was not an eloquent speech; it lacked even emphasis. It simply flowed. It flowed like the Rani in the Gersoppa water falls--------it was a simple effusion of Truth, and, therefore, of beauty."

Noted for cynicism, the writer also added, that:

"With the coming of Gandhi, Mrs. Besant became a back-number which still strove to be in the forefront- a waning star, vying in vain with the rising sun."

Legends, waning and rising stars apart, Annie's waning and Gandhi's rising had created some national problems because each of them endeavoured to go in their own way. Gandhi delivered only a few lectures, and he was no ~~rater~~ orator. Because of that, perhaps, he used to speak in low voice and thus compel the attention of his audience by the reputation he had earned as an organiser and fighter. Other than that, he was an average speaker. People respectfully listened to him even when he spoke in Hindi in South India. With all that he did not make any impression on the people during his first four years in India till 1919.

With Gokhale's death, the moderate leadership in the country suffered a setback. When Gandhi and other Indians gave a lot of lip sympathy over the loss of their GURU, it was only Annie Besant who did show that sympathy in action. She raised money to erect Gokhale Hall in Madras to perpetuate his name. That was her way to look at things. She was a dynamic spirit in action, always ebullient and always sincere.

With Gokhale gone, Gandhi didn't feel that his way was clear. He had another formidable personality to face and that was Mrs. Besant. Here, and from this point, one could see a good deal of trivials taking shape in the form of serious differences between Annie and Gandhi. As a new-commer to Indian politics, Gandhi seemed to have been doing some spade-work by talking and talking about the dead Gokhale. He spoke about him many times and at many places. All that seemed a little too much compared to Annie's not speaking at all but just raising a solid memorial in Gokhale's honour. At a meeting

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I3. K.P.S.Menon- 'Many Worlds'- Page 46-47.

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held at Nellore on the 5th May 1915, where Annie and Srinivasa Sastri too were present, Gandhi said, that: I4.

"I do not propose to infict speech upon you. I am extremely zealous of individual liberty about which we heard this morning from the lips of Mrs. Besant and from Mr. Sastri--------If my wife and I are worthy of anything that has been said at this platform and on many a platform, I have repeated, and I am here to repeat, that the inspiration that we derived was from an Indian source and that was from the late Gokhale. His life, his message, his words, his methods, have been to me a guiding star-------."

All this, however, does not make a good reading. Gandhi was harping too much on the dead Gokhale. He said that he received inspiration from 'an Indian Source, and then said about Gokhale's life, message etc.

There was a bit of nonsense here because everybody knew that Gandhi was a western educated man. All his acknowledged GURUs were Western- Christ, Thoreau, Tolstoy, Ruskin and internally, without giving expression to it, he had been learning a lot from even Mrs. Annie Besant, while he was in South Africa. How then this sudden love to the late Gokhale? Here Gandhi seemed to have been indirectly hinting Annie Besant who was right there that he didn't need anything from the West and he learnt everything from 'the Indian source' and his 'guiding star- Gokhale'. Gandhi was shrewdly preparing to play politics and to ignore Mrs. Besant. But she didn't seem to have taken note of all that. Speaking earlier at a meeting, the 2Ist Madras Provincial Conference, she gave a nice over-dose of tribute to Gandhi, and that she did because she too had to survive with her politics. Her testimony to Gandhi was, that:

"In the successful issue of the struggle in South Africa is a presage of the successful termination of the struggle for liberty on the Indian soil. We thank him not only for what he did, but also in that what he did will strengthen the Indian nation- in the future. Mr. Gandhi s great help to us is that of inspiration- an inspiration to the following of a great ideal--------."

While unveiling a portrait of his GURU at a school in Bangalore on the 8th May 1915, Gandhi said, that:

"Mr. Gokhale taught me that the dream of every Indian, who claims to love his country, should be to act in the political field, should be not to glorify in languages, but spiritualise the political life of the country and the political institutions of the country. He inspired my life and is still inspiring--------."

All this repeated talk of 'inspiration', seemed to have been to attack Mrs. Besant and to say that she was not the one who inspired nor the things 'from the western source'. Gandhi also lamented over his poor delivery of speech with no eloquence whatsoever and then hit at Mrs. Besant's gift of the gab saying that that his GURU taught him 'not to glorify in language' but spiritualise politics. Later talking to the citizens of Bangalore, he said, that:

"We have lost much of our self-respect on account of being too much Europeanised. We think and speak in English. Thereby, we impoverish our vernaculars, and estrange the feelings of the masses. A knowledge of English is not very essential to the service of our motherland."

I4. Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi- Pages 78 & 79, Vol. I3.

Here again Gandhi had gone wrong. By saying that 'a knowledge of English is not very essential to the service of our Motherland', he had already spread linguistic bickerings, low standard of education, mediocrity among ~~xx~~ politicians, educational bankruptcy among the people and ~~xx~~ so on. In fact his dead GURU was no anti-Western politician nor did he ask his SISHYA to propagate his own views to spite the face of the potential opponents. What his GURU had told him was to study the situation of the country but this SISHYA, instead of studying, was himself creating situations and standards, be it high or low!

While in Bangalore, Gandhi met the Dewan of the former state of Mysore, Sir M. Vishveswarayya, and after finishing all his lecture schedules there, he left for Ahmedabad, addressing at the same time meetings at some small wayside stations. Returning to Ahmedabad, Gandhi kept himself busy with the founding of his SATYAGRAHA ASHRAM at Sabaramati. He wrote that Swami Shraddananda wanted him to settle at Hardwar. That was in May 1915.

In the meantime, a small pinprick to Gandhi made him write a letter to G.A.Natesan of Madras, and in that he said: 15.

> "I notice that the Bangalore talk of mine has been much misrepresented and that Mrs. Besant had done me no justice whatsoever. I saw that 'talk' only day-before-yesterday and it is parody of what I actually said. I never sent Mrs. Besant any explanation for publication. I now hear that she has published what purports to be an explanation from me. Could you please send me the copies if you have seen them."

This is a small incident, but it looked like some misunderstanding between Gandhi and Annie Besant who were not at ease with each other from now on. No doubt, some words in Gandhi's speech at Bangalore, were controversial in the political sense, and so also his observations made at Nellore. All this was due to the reason that Gandhi started talking politics contrary to the advice of his GURU.

While Gandhi was grumbling that Annie's papers in Madras reported his speech somewhat differently, Annie's usual activities continued to cause increasing headache to the British statesmen in Whitehall. Annie met many people in Bombay in June 1915 just before she launched her HOME RULE League, and on the 25th September she published the news in a leading article in her NEW INDIA. She persuaded the grand old man, Dadabhai Naoroji, to become the President of the Organization. Sir Subramania Iyer agreed to be the President of the Indian Division, and then she approached Sir William wedderburn to head the Division of the same in England, but as he had other plans, George Lansbury was made the President of the Division in England.

The Indian public opinion over her starting this League was varied. The Anglo-Indian papers supported her stand. The Indian 'MIRROR' of Calcutta opposed it, and so did the PATRIOT of Madras. The TIMES OF INDIA of Bombay did not feel it opportune as it was the war time. THE ENGLISHMAN, a prominent journal, rather sneered at the idea of SWARAJ as nonsense. "Who could believe that Indians could ever rule themselves", the paper asked! 16.

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15. Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi- Vol. 13, Page 99,
16. Prof. Nethercot on Annie , Page 240.

All these opinions were published in NEW INDIA. Mrs. Besant went all over India from Madras to Calcutta, and then to Benares, Bankipur, Kanpur, Allahabad, Gwalior, Lucknow, Bombay and other places. She tried to bring Muslims and Hindus, the nationalists and conventionalists, together. She suffered some setbacks as well. V.S.Srinivasa Sastri hesitated 'to give the Muslim League what Annie had regarded as its rightful place in relation to the Home Rule League.' Her own 'Parliament' (in Adyar) also hesitated to endorse her plan, after a long debate. She found the situation 'comical'.

Those men who opposed her plan including Sastri, were all Hindus, and Muslims certainly saw the Hindu reaction to Annie's plan. The Hindus said that Mrs. Annie Besant was 'starting a League to supplant the National Congress' and thus tried to set aside the Muslim rights and claims. The later history of the Congress makes it clear that Hindus tried to alienate Muslims right from 1915. This incident illustrates the truth of the point. Annie Besant's efforts might have had a momentory setback, and Gandhi might have enjoyed within himself at her scheme being criticised. The journal- ENGLISHMAN, was perhaps, correct when it said that, "Who could believe that Indians could rule themselves?"

Despite all this, it was Mrs. Besant who was the cementing force in the Indian politics. Most of the Hindu leaders were dabbling in politics. Tilak's extremism brought him little support. Gokhale and Phirozshah Mehta- both died in 1915. Dadabhai Naoroji, Dinshah Wacha and Surendranath Benerjie, were getting old. Bepin Chandra Pal, Lala Lajpat Rai and Motilal Nehru had no definite views except to say that they too talked about Home Rule. Sir Sachidananda Sinha, Tej Bahadur Sapru and Muhammad Ali Jinnah were all gentlemen politicians. With all that, Annie Besant mustered some support to her LEAGUE with the help of Surendranath Benerjie, and both of them "received ovation at both the Congress and Home Rule conferences that ended in December 1915. They sought active cooperation of the Muslim League. 17.

What was Gandhi doing now? He seemed to have finished his country-wide study tour. He started his YOUNG INDIA journal, and its first issue came out in November 1915 with articles by V.S.Srinivasa Sastri and Mrs. Besant. Both these agreed that the 'safest course' was to fight under the banner of both the Congress and the Muslim League, and that the Home Rule League should consist of officials from both these groups. In her 68th year, the old lady went round the country, more than 10,000 miles in railway trains without losing her energy and dynamism. She collected signatures from all the 237 members of the All India Congress Committee, and also of the Muslim League, to attend a closed conference on the 25th December 1915, to discuss her Home Rule strategy.

Gandhi kept himself aloof from this sensible move all along. What he was doing during those last three months of the year, was not clear. He was perhaps busy with his YOUNG INDIA journal. Anyway he was, perhaps, contemplating to build a political base for himself with himself at its head!

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17. Prof. Nethercot on Annie Besant- Page 241.

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Though Mrs. Besant sought the Congress and Muslim League to come together in one platform, the League had its own meeting in Bombay. This gesture was Jinnah's who proposed a Congress-Muslim League alliance to campaign for SWARAJ. Several Congress personages attended the Muslim deliberations. They included Mrs. Besant, Sarojini Naidu and Gandhi himself. I8.

The reason for Gandhi's indifference for Annie's efforts to bring the Congress and Muslim League together was truly 'amusing'. It was said that: 'Mrs. Besant had sought but failed to secure Gandhi's support in launching the Home Rule League. Gandhi was opposed to a political movement which was likely to embarrass the Government during the war; he felt that the time for the constitutional reforms would come when the war was over.' Mrs. Besant was amused at Gandhi's conviction that India was bound to get self-Government after the war. She told him that only a Britain hard-pressed by the exigencies of a world war could be made to give freedom to India.

"Mrs. Besant", replied Gandhi, "you are distrustful of the British; I am not, and will not help in any agitation against them during the war."

This statement of Gandhi, no doubt, was amusing although it was consistent with his stand that he had taken while in South Africa during the Boer War, the Zulu rebellion and again in London when the world war had just started and when he organised an ambulance corps in support of the British war efforts. However, this idea of Gandhi did not hold good for long and he was forced to change his queer ideas by the time another world war started after about twenty years.

Apart from this, it is not clear why Gandhi had to oppose Mrs. Besant knowing too well that she had no other motive than service for the country. Gandhi had known her better than anyone and yet he found it not compatible to agree and work with her. This was the one major defect which Mohandas Gandhi had right from the beginning. Unfortunately he wanted his own ways to prevail and the people of the country were too poor and ignorant seventy years back, who were carried away by the legendary stories of Gandhi's South African exploits. It seemed that Gandhi worked his way up taking such negative stand amidst the slogan shouting people who shouted GANDHI-KI JAI.

The basic trouble among them was this. Annie Besant was a Britisher, a foreigner and a woman. According to all records she was sincere and dynamic, but the newly educated generation of Indians started to admire themselves and none others. The Indian politicians too did not want to recognise her merits and work objectively. They seemed to have not been happy at the fact that a woman, a foreign woman, doing so many things when Indians were almost sleeping. Moreover, it was a basic aspect of Hindu culture to look down upon women and their creative powers. Even the late Gokhale was cool towards her despite his knowing her too well. The poor millions of the country could not understand then, as they are now, the quality of the leadership of their leaders when the newly emerging leaders themselves started distributing their photographs to the people who worshipped all available mini-gods. The result of this kind of SWADESHI leadership

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I8. Jeoffry Ashe & B.R.Nanda on Gandhi.

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ended at last in disastrous consequence.

There were some more differences among the top-leaders on major issues. They differed on the passive resistance programme which was also called civil disobedience or SATYAGRAHA. Gandhi's experience in South Africa had emboldened him to introduce the same in India as well. But Annie's reaction to this non-violent non-cooperation movement has been different. There have been occasions when she poured on Gandhi tributes. During Gandhi's visit to Madras, she wrote in her COMMONWEAL, that:

> "Does Madras know that in this gentle visitor she has one of the earth's really great man?-------My own acquaintance with him dates from I889, he tells me, as, a young man and unknown Indian, he came to Madame Blavatsky's."

Annie, V.S.S.Satri and others of Madras gave Gandhi an impressive welcome at Adyar where over 200 men were present, and later a group photo was also taken. These personal cordialities apart, in politics and in their methods of work, both Annie and Gandhi greatly differed. Annie Besant's biographer wrote that: I9.

> "Gandhi's use of this (passive resistance) method had at first attracted Mrs. Besant's tentative approval, but now that she had had time to think the matter over. -------She could foresee even more dangers than she could benefit from it. Still having a high opinion of Gandhi and his potential value to India, though not necessarily as a political leader, she feared editorially that his doctrine might shut him out of election to Congress. A campaign for self-Government based on such methods, she thought, could not bring a victory in India, since the masses were too inert to respond or even to understand it. In succeeding editorials she went on to reject 'boycott' and 'obstruction' as two methods of coercing the Government. All the three editorials (in Annie's papers), though negative in approach, were closely reasoned and argumentatively effective."

Mrs. Annie Besant did not mince matters. As a dedicated leader, which she was, she was also forthright. Hhe had repeatedly written that in politics only flexible methods should be used and not the procedures which would give rise to violence and chaos. The COMMONWEAL reported that on the day of the reception for Gandhi and Kasturibai in Bombay, Gandhi had prostrated himself before the old Sir Pherozshah Mehta and referred to Gokhale as his leader and guide. Mrs. Besant commented that: 'If he (Gandhi) followed in the footsteps of those two, he would be of great help to us all".

Mrs. Besant was sincere in whatever she did. She need not have to go on for a career, name or fame because she was already 69, and her field of activity was not only India but the whole world through the Theosophical Society. Very much well-informed, intelligent, dynamic and far-seeing, there was no other Indian leader of her calibre till then. Gandhi was young enough to follow her advice and leadership but the future Mahatma was adament in the procedure that he wanted to adopt. His GURU Gokhale had already warned his colleague Bal Gangadhar Tilak, on the extremist measure the latter was preaching. To Mohandas Gandhi too, he had told many times to go slow, to study situation, not to be hasty in rushing through his pet SATYAGRAHA programme, and so on!

I9. Prof. Nethercot on Annie Besant- Page 234.

CHAPTER VII

THOSE DIFFERENCES & CONTROVERSIES.

Those differences and controversies were mainly centred around the activities of Annie and Gandhi. On Gokhale's death in Debruary 1915, Mrs. Besant was magnanimous enough to lament in her NEW INDIA that;

"Our leader- Standard bearer- had fallen", but predicted that "another man would br found in his place and The New India would continue to be at his disposal."

That was a right forecast. When she said that another man would be found, it was certain that she hit on Gandhi. But that 'another man' preferred to go in his own way and with that the whole trend of events began to take a different turn.

Gokhale was succeeded by V.S.Srinivasa Satri of Madras as head of the SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY. People had expected that the choice would fall on Gokhale's disciple-Gandhi, but it didn't happen like that. It was explained that since Gandhi 'had returned (to India), it had been discovered that there were considerable divergences of ideas between him and other members of the Organization and it was, therefore, thought best to advise him to spend a year or so in travelling about the country to reacquaint himself with the views, habits and traditions of the people.

This was another way of telling this 'another man' that he was not wanted in the Organization of his Guru and, therefore, the SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY gently advised him to travel around the country and look for himself how the country was. Gandhi did so, and while doing so, he praised his GURU and unveiled his statues and photographs everywhere he went because for a new politician a dead GURU was a safer risk than any living ones. And that was dead man's luck, but the dead GURU's friends were shrewd enough to see that this SHISHYA did not pollute the GURU's ten-year old Organization with his odd theory of passive resistance, civil disobedience and so on. Gokhale had already warned Tilak about the latter's extremist measures, and he must have privately told Gandhi how he had felt about the latter's ~~attractive~~ political agitation which bordered on something like mob upsurge. Moreover, Gokhale must have also reminded him of the fact that India was not South Africa.

All that was clear from the subsequent developments, and long after Gokhale's death. After his tour ended, Gandhi applied for the membership of the SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY, but then the new Chairman of the Society, the future Rt. hon'ble Srinivasa Sastri, had to think twice even to consider Gandhi's application, let alone admitting him into the society. Sastri made Gandhi know of the views of the members of the Society, and there was a clear indication that Gandhi would not fit into the views and policies of the Society. Gandhi too knew that, and later confessed that he might become 'a disturbing factor'. Thus in the organization of the GURU, the disciple would not find a place. That was

the joke here. What Gandhi actually wrote to Sastri on the 13th January 1916, from ~~Ahmedabad~~ Ahmedabad, was as under: I

"————Whilst there is possibility of cooperation when we are working independently, I can see that I would, as a member, becoming a disturbing factor. The methods of the Society as such are so totally different from mine in many respects. Our common discipleship would constitute an indissoluble bond though we would be following out Mr. Gokhale's work from different viewpoints."

So Gandhi's study tour of India making Gokhale his emblem did not pay him even in the form of a membership of Gokhale's SOCIETY. But Gandhi, as a politician, did know how to get on irrespective of the SOCIETY and its membership. He simply said later on that his withdrawal of the application truly made him 'a member of the SOCIETY.'

But how? The correspondence show that he was not admitted, and the entire writings on either side were ~~politics~~ polite. Perhaps, all this happened due to Gokhale himself who had known Gandhi better, and he must have left instruction very long before his death that he did not approve of Gandhi's revolutionary politics although it was described as non-violent. So that was how it worked. If Gandhi's methods were not suitable to a SOCIETY, how could it suit the country as a whole? Gandhi wrote recollecting all this after many years, that: 2.

"It was clear that when there was such a sharp division amongst the members of the Society over admitting me, by far the best course for me was to withdraw my application for admission, and save those opposed to me from a delicate situation. Therein, I thought, lay my loyalty to the SOCIETY and Gokhale————The withdrawal of my application made me truly a member of the Society."

Again how- the echo asks! Gandhi could not agree with Mrs. Besant's Home Rule League, and the reason for this was more of personal rather than any policy matters. That was how the attitude of Gandhi had been against old Mrs. Besant. Now he was kept away from his much talked of Guru's SERVANTS' OF INDIA SOCIETY also. Tilak's extremist camp would not be fitting either because they had already a leader in Tilak himself. What exactly Gandhi wanted now? Was it leadership? He turned to the Indian National Congress, a parent organization, which used to have annual sessions under the presidentship of the old scholarly aristocrats. Therefore, Gandhi thought that he might fit in there and take up some footing there. In a speech on the 4th February 1916, only two days before his famous but controversial Benares speech, Gandhi said that:

"The Congress should, of course, be kept alive, the true condition of the country should be placed before the people through speeches and writings and efforts made to have education provided to every Indian. What was the aim behind all this?———— Framing a constitution for the SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY, he (Gokhale) laid down that the duty of its members would be to spiritualise political life in India."

That was right. Gokhale wanted it to be so. But it is impossible to spiritualise politics but before thinking in that direction, efforts could be made to spiritualise politicians. Whether Gandhi did that or not, one could see from the quality of the post-Gandhian politician in the country, who were all greedy for power and money with 'paupers becoming

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1 Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi- Vol. 13.
2 My Experiments with Truth- Part V, Chap. VI.

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princes' in the country. As Gandhi went on creating a Guru for him with Gokhale's name, a politician who was created by Gandhi sought to make the latter his Guru. But all these Gurus were later betrayed by their SISHYAs. So the story of the political GURUs and SARKARI SADHUs created by politicians always end that way.

Gandhi had differed from others on another important subject, as already said, on the issue of offering cooperation to the British during the wartime. In the past he had demonstrated his sympathy and loyalty to the British when they were fighting wars. He would not agree with Mrs. Besant when she raised the cry, 'The moment of England's difficulty is the moment of India's opportunity', and she meant what she said.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak too, like Gokhale, was greatly sceptical over the passive resistance movement succeeding in the country in a non-violent way, as Gandhi had been pleading. Tilak, in fact, was 'a man impelled by a venom and hatred against everything British'. It was also said that "sedition in India is like the tides which erode the coast line as the sea encroaches. The last high tide was in 1907-08————We must have a dam in order lest it inundated sound land." 3.

Gandhi's offer to stand by the British and offer them cooperation in the war and such ideas, seemed to have been the things which the rest of the politicians didn't understand. Most of them were practical politicians, and amidst them Gandhi, though practical, was also a visionary. Tilak told Gandhi on passive resistance, that: 4.

> "I like the programme well enough, but I have my doubts as to the country being with us in the self-denying ordinance which non-cooperation movement present to the people."

When that was the situation then, and when Gandhi was almost isolated from the rest during his first two or three years in India, Mrs. Besant and others had raised the question whether 'after all Gandhi could not serve India better as a social and spiritual reformer than as a participant in the rough-and-tumble of practical politics." 5.

Anyway if Gokhale had lived at that time after 1915, the differences between him and Gandhi would have developed to an enormous extent as it did develop between Gandhi and other politicians. As to Mrs. Besant and Gandhi, there was already a feud between them but Mrs. Besant was always liberal in her praise for Gandhi, and the latter reciprocated those sentiments warmly. In the course of a lecture at the Theosophical Society, Gandhi spoke in appreciation of Mrs. Besant's services to India and also added 'in moving terms that he owed a debt to the Theosophical Society, which he could never pay.'

With all this, in politics both Mrs. Besant and Gandhi differed vastly. The first point of difference between them was on supporting the British during the wartime. Mrs. Besant was not for supporting the British, while Gandhi said that 'Indians should support

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3. Robert Payne & B.R.Nanda on Gandhi,
4. Stanley A.Wolpert on 'Tilak & Gokhale'.
5. Prof. Nethercot on Annie, and the journal- the COMMONWEAL quoted.

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and fight in the war in order to win respect'. But this high-sounding principle of Gandhi melted within twenty years when he fought against the British saying that the circumstances had changed during the second World War.

In that way Gandhi's ideas were not well-receiced from the restmt of the leaders. Apart from Gokhale, Tilak and Mrs. Besant, the old Dadabhai Naoroji, Mehta and Wacha too kept aloof. Motilal Nehru, Bhagavan Das, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Ramaswami Iyer, Sarojini Naidu, Madanmohan Malaviya, Lajpat Rai, Subramania Iyer, Srinivasa Sastri and others were all behind Mrs. Besant. Non-party people like the Nobel Laurette Tagore too was not in favour of Gandhi's ideas. Mrs. Besant had always felt that she was justified in forming the Home Rule League. She and Gandhi, with all their mutual compliments between them and her Adyar entertainment to him and her newspaper writings in appreciation of his work elsewhere, they 'never got on well. By the time her LEAGUE was launched Gandhi was finally in motion along his own track, and always experimenting, without a master. 6.

It seemed that Gandhi was not only isolated due to his own queer ideas which he could not uphold all his life, he was also deeply frustrated as well. He was groping to find some footing to announce his leadership. The way he gave expression to his thoughts and the things he went on saying at different platforms showed that he was trying to get a foothold somehow and somewhere in Indian political arena.

Secondly, Gandhi, perhaps, unwittingly exhibited his inner urge to show up by his irrelevant speech that he delivered in Benares. A 47-year old seasoned politician who had conducted political movements, should have known better as to what to talk at the academic institutions. Gandhi seemed to have gone too much astray by his fighting speech. Before a distinguished gathering that included the Viceroy Lord Hardinge, Gandhi flared up the audience, provoked those on the dais and caused to create a stir in the hall. But he did not mention anything about this incident in his autobiography. Perhaps, he left it to others to deal with later on. Anyway here is one side of that 'story' said by one after 45 years, and that goes as under: 7.

> "Mrs. Besant was on the brink of a triumph outside politics. She aspired, not altogether absurdly, to a position of acknowledged leadership in the realm of the intellect. This prize had elluded her through 68 years of her life, as indeed it had been in her previous lives as Hypatia of Alexandria and Giordane Bruno, which had been both cut short. The present incarnation (of hers) was at least looking hopeful. Her School at Benares, started in 1898, had been enlarged and granted University status. At a three-day function in February 1916, it was to be refounded as Hindu University Central College in the presence of the Viceroy, and an array of Rajas and Maharajas and their magnificent ladies————."

Did anyone hatch a plot to wreck this auspicious event? Indeed, what happened to an extent of administering a shock to poor old Mrs. Besant and to all her national efforts for 23 years from 1893 to 1916? Who wrecked what, and how? Politics could even be devilish sport at the hands of gods who aspire to come up and show up.

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6. Jeoffry Ashe- on Gandhi, Pages 146 and 147,
7. " " " Page 153.

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What actually happened was quite unexpected. When the moment came, and people were seated, Lord Hardinge did his Viceregal duty at the foundation ceremony, and sat in a place of honour, surrounded by bejewelled Rajas and Nobles. After the initial formalities and some speeches, on the third day of the function, it was said, that:

> "Gandhi rose up to speak wearing a plain cloak, short DHOTI and turban———In-stead of uttering platitudes about culture and progress, he was exhorting Indians to self-criticism. With a sinking heart, the foundress listened as the dreadful sentence rolled on———."

Apart from Theosophy, Mrs. Besant's chief interest had been education and politics. But in the beginning of the year 1916, she and Gandhi came into collusion, on the eve of the foundation laying ceremony of the Benares Hindu University. That was also a money raising camapign and the whole function had an all India publicity. Mrs. Besant and Pandit Malaviya got up the function with great magnificence. The Maharaja of Darbhanga, the president of the University Committee, was to read the opening address. There were parades, songs, dramas, cricket matches, etc and the whole festival was colourful. The retiring Viceroy Lord Hardinge, the Maharajas and other dignitaries were on the platform. Gandhi was there as one of the speakers. The whole area was crowded, and so also there were troops, the intelligence men and police all over, especially because the Viceroy was there. Mohandas Gandhi talked extempore, and the result was that the meeting broke up prematurely in utter confusion: The text of the speech is too long. He began his speech saying, that: 8.

> "Friends, I wish to tender my humble apology for the long delay that took place before I was able to reach this place———Friends, under the influence of the matchless eloquence of the lady (Mrs. Besant) who just sat down, pray, do not believe that our University has become a finished product and that all the young men who are to come to the University that has yet to rise and come into existence, have also come and returned from it as finished citizens of a great empire. Do not go away with any such impression———"

Even if Gandhi's lecture was meant to students, he began his lecture taking a negative view of the situation, and that seemed not fair. Continuing he said, that:

> "You will never be able merely through the lip to give the message that India, I hope, will one day deliver to the world. I myself have been 'fed up' with speeches and lectures———."

This is a hint or taunt to whom? Is it to that 'lady of matchless eloquence'? In 1915, Gandhi himself delivered all over India some hundreds of speeches, and those could be seen in his 'collected works'. Without 'speech-making' how could one be come a leader? Gandhi proceeded to say that:

> "It is not enough that our ears are feasted———but it is necessary that our hearts have got to be touched and that our hands and feet have got to be moved. We have been told during the last two days how necessary it is, if we are to retain our hold upon the simplicity of the Indian character, that our hands and feet should move in unison with our hearts; but this is only by way of preface———."

That was all right. That was 'by way of preface'. But then the controversial points were yet to come, and it flowed sooner than expected from Gandhi's tongue. He said:

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8. Collected Works of Gandhi' Vol. 13, this speech on the 6th February 1916, at the opening of the Benares Hindu 'Varsity.

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"I wanted to say, it is a matter of deep humiliation and shame for us that I am compelled this evening under the shadow of this great college, in the sacred city, to address my countrymen in a language that is foreign to me————At the sessions of the great Congress in December last, there was much vaster audience, and will you believe me when I tell you that the only speeches that touched that huge audience in Bombay were the speeches that were delivered in Hindustani————I am hoping that this University will see to it that the youths who come to it will receive their instruction through the medium of their vernaculars. Our language is a reflection of ourselves, and if you tell me that our languages are too poor to express the best thought, then I say that the sooner we are wiped out of existence, the better for us. Is there a man who dreams that English can ever become the national language of India? (cries- 'never') Why this handicap on the nation?"

This idea today would best fit in what the most Indians, Hindu enthusiasts and the Jan Sangh party and some others say. But it was regrettable that Gandhi could have said that English was also necessary along with our own education in those days. He should know that he rushed out of his country to the far away England breaking all customary barriers. He knew that there were law colleges in India at that time and then why did he go? Because of English education Ram Mohan Roy, Vivekananda, Naoroji and others went abroad and brought fame to the country as well as to themselves, and if Gandhi had been only inside his Gujarat with his Gojarati language, how far he would have gone? Well, Gandhi was a politician, and that seemed to have been a wrong way to begin his politics in India, and that proved to have been a divisive politics. Look, he also said, that:

"I have heard it said that after all it is English-educated India which is leading and which is doing all the things for the nation. It would be monstrous if it were otherwise————But suppose that we had been receiving during the past fifty years education through our vernaculars, what should we had today? We should have today a free India, we should have our educated men, not as if they were foreigners in their own land————whatever they would have gained during the last fifty years would be a heritage of the nation (applause)"

But this exhortion, applause, etc seemed to have been just politics in an educational institution. Gandhi knew or not what he was saying, but those who applauded the speach were just carried away as street mobs usually do. Now turning'to another subject', Gandhi said, that:

"The Congress has passed a resolution about self-Government, and I have no doubt that the Congress and Muslim League will come forward with some tangible suggestions. But I, for one, must frankly confess that I am not so much interested in what they will be able to produce————No paper contribution will ever give us self-Government. No amount of speaches will ever make us fit for self-government. It is only our conduct that will fit us for it (applause). And how are we trying to govern ourselves————?"

All this seemed to have been an attack on the elderly politicians of the country and on their 'paper resolutions' at the Congress sessions every year. Speaking on the Vishwanath temple in Benares, and 'thinking audibly', Gandhi said that:

"Is not this great temple a reflection of our own character? I speak feelingly as a Hindu. Is it right that the lanes of our sacred temple should be as dirty as they are ?————I entirely agree with the President of the Congress that before we think of self-Government, we shall have to do the necessary plodding. In every city there are two divisions, the cantonment and the city proper. The city mostly is a stinking den————We do not know the elementary law of cleanliness. We spit anywhere————".

Most of what Gandhi said, although in a wrong place and time, was true. He later turned to yet another topic and said, that:

> "I now introduce to you another scene. H.H. the Maharaja, who presided over the function yesterday, spoke about the poverty of India. Other speakers laid great stress upon it. But what did we witness in the great pandal in which the foundation ceremony was performed by the Viceroy? Certainly a most gorgeous show, as exhibition of jewellery which chose to come from Paris. I compare with the richly bedecked noblemen the millions of the poor, and I feel like saying to these noblemen: 'There is no salvation for India unless you strip yourselves of this jewellery, and hold it in trust for your countrymen ('hear, hear')——Whenever I hear of a great palace rising in any city of India——I say 'Oh, it is the money that has come from the agriculturists'——Our salvation can only come through the farmer——."

All this was quite all right! And now came the most controversial point that Gandhi allowed himself to say, as under:

> "Now, last but not the least, it is my bounden duty to refer to what agitated our minds during these two or three days. All of us have had many anxious moments while the Viceroy was going through the streets of Benares. There were detectives stationed in many places. We were horrified. We asked ourselves: 'Why this distrust? Is it not better that even Lord Hardinge should die than live a living death?'——Why was it necessary to impose these detectives on us? We may fume, we may fret, we may resent, but let us not forget that India today in her impatience has produced an army of anarchists. I myself an anarchist but of another type. But there is a class of anarchists among us——.
>
> "If we trust and fear God, we shall have to fear no one; not Maharajas, not Viceroys, not the detectives, not even King George! I honour the anarchists for his love of the country. I honour him for his bravery in being willing to die for his country; but I ask him, 'Is killing honourable?' I deny it——The bomb-thrower creates secret plot, is afraid to come into the open, and when caught pays the penalty of misdirected zeal. I have been told, 'Had we not done this, had some people not thrown bombs, we should never have gained what we have got with reference to the partition movement'. (Mrs. Besant: 'Please stop it'). This was what I said: in Bengal when Mr. Lyons presided over the meeting. I think, what I am saying is necessary. If I am told to stop, I shall obey (turning to the president). I await your orders. If you consider that by my speaking as I am, I am not serving the country and the empire, I shall certainly stop. (Cries- go on.) (the Chairman- please explain your object). I am explaining my object. I am simply——" (interruptions).

At this point, Gandhi was gaining confidence of the audience, mostly the students who heard him saying something about anarchists. He proceeded to say that:

> "My friends, please do not resent this interruption. If Mrs. Besant suggests that I should stop, she does so because she loves India so well, and she considers that I am erring in thinking audibly before you young men. But even so, I simply say that I want to purge India of the atmosphere of suspicion on either side—— Is it not better that we talk under the shadow of this college than that we should be talking irresponsibly in our homes?——I know that there is nothing that students are not discussing. I am therefore turning the searchlight towards ourselves——."

After this, Gandhi raised the topic of the 'much abused' Civil Service, and said that:

> "Look at the history of the British Empire and the British nation; freedom loving as it is, it will not be a party to give freedom to a people who will not take it themselves. Learn your lesson if you wish to from the Boer War. Those who were enemies of that Empire only a few years ago have now become friends—— (interruptions, some people walked out, sppech ended abruptly)."

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At this stage all the princes and dignitaries left the meeting in a body. This was the famous Benares speech that raised plenty of controversy. After that what happened, anyone could guess. It was said that: 9.

"The scene of the assembly was set when the Hindu University was solemenly opened by the Viceroy————A smiling Annie Besant, white-haired, wearing white clothes, white stockings and white shoes, looked down from the platform at crowds of admiring students who honoured her as both revolutionary and an educator. That she should have received the foundation deeds for her University from the hands of the Viceroy was the crowning irony."

"The function started on the 4th February (1916), and Gandhi's speech was on the 6th. The Maharaja of Darbhanga, Sir Rameshwar Singh, was in the Chair with his resplendent uniform bedecked with jewels. Gandhi striding across the dais in white cloak————and, spoke clearly, with an unexpected bluntness. His was not a prepared speech. He was determined to bring some home-truths to the attention of students and princes————The Maharajas had made large donations to the University. Gandhi was found deliberately needling them, instead of demonstrating the gratitude they expected. He was commanding them to sell their jewels————."

The whole speech of Gandhi revealed that he had nursed an ambition to become a leader, and he used that platform of an educational institution to become one. This speech and its repercussions were later called, 'the Benares incident', and that was a spark that lurked underneath. Gandhi snubbed the builders of the palaces stating that: 'Oh, it is the money that came from the agriculturists'. Later he passed 'from the tactless to the unmentionable; the anxiety felt for Lord Hardinge's safety, the posting of the detectives in the streets'. He then came to the subject of 'the army of anarchists', and then ending with, 'I am an anarchist'. Then came his words, 'If we trust and fear God, we shall have to fear no one————not even King George'.

Poor Annie Besant was the targeted target of this future Mahatma. Perhaps, in his youthful enthusiasm, he allowed himself to say things which were all irrelevant there. Later he must have felt it so. In one of his letters, Gandhi had apologized for the scene created by his speech, a violent speech, by one who preached non-violence. It is curious to note that Gandhi left the whole incident unsaid and unmentioned in his autobiography.

In those days it was Mrs. Annie Besant who had stood in the way of Gandhi's becoming a top leader. Her fault was only that she was there as a great dominating figure by virtue of her own right and by her record of service in many fields, and in many parts of the world. Gandhi came to India just a year prior to that after about 24 years abroad, first as a student and later as a lawyer and agitator in South Africa. So in India he had his own reasons for his frustration as a politician. The Benares speech was the outcome of such a frustration. As somewhat younger than other Indian leaders, Gandhi thought that he had a special right to address the students and, in fact, at the Hindu University function he was supposed to address to the students although it was an open assembly of people of all walks of life.

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9. Robert Payne & Jeoffry Ashe- the Gandhian biographers.

Gandhi, as his opponents used to say, was a 'wily politician'. He could talk so much against English language and English education in India in one breath, and in the other he could also say, that:

> "I cannot cast out English knowledge from my small store of knowledge————I cannot boycott English language. Its international position cannot be disputed. The superior role of English language cannot go."

Now which of the statements of Gandhi the common men should take? Was it the one that he said in favour of English, or the one said against that. It is difficult to take Gandhi seriously as one would go on studying him, whereas in respect of Annie Besant, despite her belief in occultism, seldom one would come across such contradictions in her. It is in instances such as these one could see the difference between the two. Annie was both a philosopher and a politician with a purpose and a message in her whereas Gandhi, a shrewd politician, no doubt, but it is difficult to say about his general outlook although he adhered to his much proclaimed truth and BRAHMACHARYA.

Gandhi's references at his Benares speech i) to the foreign language in the Indian educational system, ii) to the 'lady's matchless eloquence' and for speech-making in general, iii) to the army of detectives and police, iv) to the anarchists saying that 'I am an anarchist' but of a different type, v) to the bejewelled princes and nobles, vi) to the members of the Indian Civil Service, etc contributed to the disorderly conclusion and abrupt end of the meeting. In the same breath, Gandhi also criticised the Indian National Congress of those days, saying that:

> "No paper contribution will ever give us self-government. It is only our conduct that will fit us for it."

Furthermore, when Gandhi spoke about his love to anarchists, Mrs. Besant who was sitting along with the President, feared that a riot might be incited 'in that part of the 'gunpowdery' audience. She raised a point of order and told the chairman to stop that what had become purely a political speech. The Chairman, the Maharaja of Darbhanga, gave five minutes to Gandhi to complete his speech, but by that time the sensitive audience, were thoroughly roused. The Maharaja of Alwar rose up first, and the others followed suit, including the Chairman himself. At this time, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya came forward and announced the next day's proceedings and closed the meeting almost abruptly.

The audience had loved to hear Gandhi's fighting speech and thus see the fun, and that's what a mob would generally love to see. The people were 'muttering and rumbling' and groups were forming on the floor arguing things among themselves. Mrs. Besant made a frantic bid to avert disaster. She asked Gandhi (through the Chairman) to stop. He politely turned to her and then to the Chairman, but the words that passed among them were almost drowned. Shouts of 'sit down' mingled with rival shouts of 'go on' were heard, and, Gandhi was on till he had to stop abruptly. IO

IO. Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi- Vol. I3, & a letter dated the 7th Feb. I9I6, Jeoffry Ashe on Gandhi- Page I54.

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The Commissioner of Benares wanted to book Gandhi for his speech, but Pandit M. Malaviya dissuaded him from doing so in the name of the University. Next day morning Gandhi wrote a letter of explanation to the Maharaja of Darbhanga expressing regret 'at the last night's incident'. He also said, that:

> "My sole object in referring to the Viceregal visit was to express the very strong views I hold against all acts of violence and so-called anarchy--------I felt deeply humiliated that extraordinary precautions should have been rendered for the protection of the person of one of the noblest of the Viceroys-------."

This explanation, however, does not sound well, especially by one who said so many things in so many words, and to the extent of blurting out as though in emotion that, "we shall have to fear no one, not Viceroy, not the detectives, not even King George'. It was this kind of cheap politicking that Gandhi introduced, was the cause for the disorder in the academic institutions in the 1920s and 1930s. Gandhi's refernce to all that in the inaugural or the foundation-laying function of a new University, raised up by the liberal contribution of both the people, princes and the Government, were unwarranted and uncalled for.

After all Gandhi's South African politics was limited to some thousands of Indian immigrants although in India it made a big news in those days. He thought that in India he could take to politics as a profession, and indeed, that was what Gandhi did during the whole of the year 1915. He was unwittingly playing against the old Mrs. Besant just in order to make himself felt in India. About the above incident, Gandhi also said, that:

> "I proceeded, but still noticed stir on the platform, and that Mrs. Besant was whispering to the princes who were sitting near her that I was neither withdrawing nor explaining--------The next thing I observed was that the princes rose up one after the other."

But all reports suggest that Gandhi kept on talking and there was no time to him to watch Mrs. Besant and hear her whispering others all that he said above. Mrs. Besant was emphatic in her assertion that she 'did not suggest to princes to leave'. [11]

However, Gandhi continued to say that it was his 'firm belief that, but for Mrs. Besant's hasty and ill-conceived interruption, nothing would have happened'and his speech in its completed state would have left no room for any misunderstanding. It was however difficult to agree with this contention because the tone of Gandhi's speech was very much provocative. Mrs. Besant, perhaps, rightly interrupted, otherwise, Gandhi would have continued unbridled and the whole scene would have ended disastrously. If Mrs. Besant had not interrupted there were many others listening to him gasping their breath and waiting something to explode somewhere. That was how the 'gun-powdery' mood of the audience had existed at that time.

Gandhi knew that he was emotional and that he went a bit out of the way. It was because of that he wrote to the President of the assembly, 'regretting over' the whole affair. Ten days later, Gandhi wrote, of course, not admitting openly his own responsibility for the incident, that: [12]

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11. Bombay Chronicle, the 10th Feb. 1916 & the NEW INDIA, Madras.
12. Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi- Vol. 13 and Press letters.

"Mrs. Besant's reference in the NEW INDIA, and certain other reference to the Benares Incident, perhaps, render it necessary for me to return to the subject, however disinclined I may be to do so. Mrs. Besant denies my statement with reference her whispering to the princes-------I can only say that if I can trust my eyes and my ears, I must adhere to the statement I have made------.

"While I was speaking, Mrs. Besant was almost behind me. When the Maharaja rose, Mrs. Besant also had risen. I had ceased speaking before the Rajas actually left the platform. I gently suggested to her that she might have refrained from interrupting, but that if she disapproved of the speech after it was finished, she could have dissociated herself from my sentiments. But she with some degree of warmth, said, 'how could we sit still when you were compromising everyone of us on the platform? You ought not to have made the remark you did.' This answer of Mrs. Besant does not quite tally with her solicitude for me which alone, according to her version of the incident, prompted her to interrupt the speech-------.

"Finally,I observe that Mr. Setlur of Bombay, who has written on the incident to The HINDU, in no friendly mood towards me and, who I think in some respects totally unfairly has endeavoured to tear me into pieces---------He thinks that the general impression was not that I was encouraging the anarchists but that I was playing the role of an apologist for the civilian bureaucrats--------.

"In order that the fullest justice might be done both to Mrs. Besant and myself, I would make the following suggestion. She says that she does not propose to defend herself by quoting the sentence which drove the princes away and that that would be playing into the enemies' hands; according to her previous statement, my speech is already in the hands of the detectives, so that, so far as ~~myself~~ my safety was concerned, her forbearence is not going to be of the slightest use--------I will conclude this statement by repeating what I have said before, that but for Mrs. Besant's interruption, I would have concluded my speech within a few minutes and no possible misconception about my views of anarchism would have arisen."

This is a long statement of four or five printed pages, and it seemed that Gandhi was struggling to explain himself. But then the above statement is not convincing enough. Even before he spoke about anarchy or anarchist, and long before did anyone interrupt him, he had already expressed several long sentences on points quite irrelevant on that occasion. Even then he should thank those ~~dignitaries~~ dignitaries who were on the dais for tolerating his speech for so long. If, as he says, Annie Besant had interrupted him after he said all that, one should say that she was perfectly right. If she had failed to interrupt, there would have been a great confusion and a type of 'anarchy' which Gandhi 'loved'. [13]

On the whole, the entire speech was political, and not at all educational, in an institution of that type. After all what was Gandhi's academic achievement? He was just a matriculate, and then two-and-a-half years in England and then returned where as Annie Besant was a honours graduate in science, an ex-member of London School Board, etc etc. Gandhi's trying to make Annie a scape-goat was certainly not convincing. Anyway he was in the defence till the whole thing cooled down. In the meantime, Mrs. Besant explained her side of the story, thus:

"As Mr. Gandhi has made a statement-------I think it well to say that my interruption was due to the fact that the English man behind me, who, I concluded, was a detective officer, made the remark, 'Everything he says is being taken down and will be sent to the Commissioner'--------I thought it better to suggest the Chairman that politics

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[13] Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi- Vol. 13, Pages 239 & 563,
THE HINDU, the 17th Feb.1916, the NEW INDIA & THE MADRAS MAIL.

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were out of place in that meeting. I did not suggest to the princes to leave nor do I know who did. I am well aware Mr. Gandhi would rather be killed than kill. But I do think that his remarks were capable of misconstruction and I feared for his personal safety under conditions existing in Benares————."

In another version of her statement, Mrs. Besant said, that: I4.

"Mr. Gandhi telephoned to ask if I would put in a statement for him (in NEW INDIA) and I answered, 'yes'. I regret that I must traverse the first paragraph of the statement. I could not see how 'if Mrs. Besant was almost behind me' he could have seen her 'whispering' to the princes on the far aside of the President, nor how they could have heard my whisper; there was one prince on my side, who did not move till after the rest had gone. I did not leave with the princes but remained with my friends round me and, in fact, Gandhi says, was discussing with them, while he also says that I left along with the princes. I did not leave till some minutes after the meeting was over, and then not even by the way they went but by a path which led towards my house from the platform————."

In the year I9I6, one must remember, Mrs. Besant was a 69-year old lady of remarkable talents, dynamic energy, great intellect and unimpeachable honesty. No one could dupe her by legal quibblings. She had argued in high courts and in higher courts many a time, and put even the legal experts into shame. Her force of character was astounding. Gandhi was simply a 47-years old child before her, and he should not have taken to debunk the old lady by the sort of speeches he made at several places, and by the way he tried to blame her in order to defend himself from his emotional and partly envious outburst at an educational institution. Mrs. Besant was perfectly correct in asking the Chairman to put a stop to the political speech of Gandhi, because it was her show; it was her efforts, and the Hindu College that was just becoming University, was her baby whom she nursed and fed. This South African 'wizard', according to his sycophants, had no experience of doing constructive work in the field of education and culture excepting what he did at his Phoenix ~~Farm~~ and Tolstoy Farms. He should not have used the University platform to blurt out things like that. Of course, students might applaud, and there are many ways to invite applause and cheers from the mob, and Gandhi's at the Benares Hindu University, was one such method. He wanted to build his image, his leadership and thus enforce himself on the country. He was not yet a Mahatma and he had a right to listen to Mrs. Besant, whom he knew very well than anyone else, and hers was a soul that was worth following, and Gandhi knew that, otherwise, he would not have had her photograph in his office room in the far away South Africa.

No biographer, either of Annie or of Gandhi, had analysed this aspect of Gandhi's mind. They have simply stated the facts. Before going further, it would be pertinent to see what Mrs. Besant had to say further on the episode. She said that:

"I have no report of Mr. Gandhi's speech, but he desires me to mention the statements which I thought necessitated the interruption. I answer that I thought that in a non-political meeting, with princes and many others present, who would suffer from Government displeasure, he should not jave twice spoken of the possibility of the English being driven bag and baggage out of the country and of his being ready, if he

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I4. The NEW INDIA, dated the I7th February I9I6, & the Madras Mail.

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thought Indians fit for self-Government which he did not, to march with thousands of his countrymen to the muzzle of English guns and die gloriously; that it was unwise to say bluntly, 'I am an anarchist', without explaining what he meant, and to speak of bombs bringing about the annulment of the partition of Bengal--------."

Continuing, she said:

"If the meeting had been called by Mr. Gandhi, it would have been no one's business but his own what he chose to say; as it was, the University Committee, to which I belong, was responsible to those we had invited. It may be that I ought to have left Mr. Gandhi to go his own way, despite the-------and the complaints all around me. I meant to do him a kindness and prevent the more violent interruption which would have probably taken place, had I remained silent. I am glad that Mr. Gandhi has explained what he meant to say, though I regret his misstatements about myself."

The above explanation of Mrs. Besant sounds reasonable, sensible and accurate to any sane mind. Further, in order to put Gandhi in his own place, she further said in her NEW INDIA, with the caption- 'In Defence of Mr. Gandhi', that: I5.

"Those who have read Mr. Gandhi's statement on his speech--------will at once recognise his perfect innocence of all wrong intention-------But now that Gandhi himself has forced my hand, asking for what I had refused to others, I am free to speak out, and to say why words which, from another, would have connoted wrong, were, so far as his intent was concerned, innocent of harm. Moreover, he did not know, as I knew, that the students before him were seething with anger in consequence of the way in which they had been treated by the CID officers, a number of them interned in the College for the day-------respectable men had been arrested in the town during the previous days--------It was rather a 'gun-powder' audience, and I feared that some of them, not knowing Mrs. Gandhi's principle of non-resistance, might take his remarks on the realm of bomb throwing as a justification for the use of such means, despite his strictures on them."

"To consider the remarks themselves, what Mr. Gandhi said as to the English leaving India by compulsion was, I venture to think, unwise, but it did not bear the sense that it would have had in my own mouth, since I am actively working for Home Rule--------But it must be remembered that from Gandhi's lips this does not mean fighting, as it would mean from mine----------He has already led a crowd against armed men, willing to die but not to slay------".

"It was unwise to say boldly, 'I am an anarchist', in a country where anarchism connotes bombs-------Many of the noblest and purest men and women in Europe are anarchists in the sense in which Mr. Gandhi used the word-------They are the true mystics, and God within them guides them; they need no outside law. The MADRAS MAIL was annoyed that Mr. Gandhi was apparently, compared to Tolstoy, but Mr. Gandhi is the greater of the two- save from the literary standpoint. Tolstoy lived as a peasant and made shoes for his living; Gandhi lives similarly, and helps in the work of his community. Tolstoy was detested by the Russian Government as Gandhi by the South African; but Gandhi has suffered for his people as Tolstoy never did----.

"I have been turning up my speech of I894, delivered in the pandal of the Madras Congress of that year, and it is curiously applicable, in its remarks on the Prophet, to the philosophic idea of anarchism, the 'without Government' of the far-off Golden Age, when none shall teach his brother but 'all shall be taught of God'. The Prophets like Gandhi, Tolstoy, Carpenter, proclaim that far-off ideal, but the work-a-day world is not ready for it nor will be for many thousands of years-------But what outer law does Gandhi need, who leads a life of utter selflessness of purity, simplicity, of daily, hourly self-abnegation? Such men are priceless assets of the nation which give them birth and they inspire to heroism and to nobility of character--------We honour and venerate him for his life and lofty ideals, even when we think his words unwise in the difficult circumstances of the time, Sd) Mrs.Besant".

I5. The NEW INDIA of the I7th Feb. I9I6, & reproduced in the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi- Vol. I3.

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That was how Mrs. Besant of great nobility and understanding, found Gandhi even though she explained at length that his words were 'unwise in the circumstances'. Writing on the I6th February I9I6, in her paper, she again said about PROPHETS AND POLITICIANS, stating ~~tha~~ that: I6.

> "Politics are full of compromises, and the prophet cannot compromise. He must hold the ideal without compromise, else his value is lost. The politician must keep his eyes fixed on the ideal for his guidance but he must build bridges over gulfs, and ladders up precipices. Mr. Gandhi feels that to consider time and place and surroundings is treason to truth. I, in the humbler role of a politician, regard them as factors in the great political game, the LEELA of nation--------In our different ways, he and I both try to serve God and the People, and though we may differ in methods, we have but a single goal."

This was Annie, a great~~ly~~ woman of saintly mould, a saintess in the garb of politician, and religious and social reformer. All that she said was a lesson to Gandhi- a saint-in-the-making, and on whom Annie showered tributes as 'a prophet'. But if Annie had lived till I94~~8~~, she would have seen that her would-be prophet had failed on many occasions by compromising his principles just like any other politician. The last great instance for this was his submission to what his one-time followers manouvred behind his back on the issue of the creation of Pakistan. That eventually brought his end as well.

In those days some people blamed Annie for the Benares Incident because she was a white woman, a Britisher, and that was, perhaps, her KARMA, in which theory she ardently believed. Many a time she had been the victim of such prejudicial gossips, and even some recent ill-informed writers like Erik Erikson too did not hesitate to say that Annie was 'apparently becoming jealous of the little man in the loin cloth'. I7.

This kind of reporting was nonsense, be the reporters white or brown. In February I9I6, Gandhi was fully clothed or over-clothed with his DHOTI, turban, etc. He took to loin cloth only after I922. Moreover, from what Gandhi spoke on that occasion, and from the events that followed the Benares Incident, one could safely conclude that it was Gandhi who had gone out of the way in his speech. If the organizer of the meeting had been an Indian leader of the stature of Annie Besant, the consequence would have been very serious, and Gandhi would not have been allowed to proceed in the way he did. The subsequent explanation of Mrs. Besant was more convincing and justified despite Gandhi's effort to defend himself after apologising for the scene that he had created. After all, even the would-be Mahatmas and the puffed-up prophets too could go wrong, and that's what one should conclude from this episode, which was called the 'Benares Incident'.

I6. The NEW INDIA & the Besant Spirit- Vol. 3, Adyar Publications, Page I36,
I7. Eric H. Erikson on Gandhi's Truth- page 287.

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CHAPTER VIII.

AN ERA OF HOME RULE MILITANCY.

As the war in Europe was going on in full swing, the Indian nationalists decided on intensifying their agitation, and in that Mrs. Besant was in the forefront. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, of course, was vociferous. Their main demand was for the representative institutions so that the 'natives' could share power and prestige in the national life. But then the Muslims have always had their reservations, and the Muslim League held that they were in favour of the autocratic British rule for India of many races and communities. The Indian leaders wanted the recruitment to Government service be made through competitive tests but the League said that nominations by the Government were a better method. If the nationalists preached secularism and democracy, the Muslim League said that Muslims were different from others and they would not agree to merge into a common Indian community. The Act of 1909 granted a separate electorate to Muslims, indirectly recognising them as a separate political entity. With the concession given to Muslims in 1909 of separate electorates, they would elect representatives to seats reserved for the community, and with that began the Hindu-Muslim conflict of the century.

The politicians of the time did not see far ahead. They didn't anticipate trouble from Muslims. Both Gokhale and Mrs. Besant were optimistic about the result of the Minto-Morley Reforms of 1909, and both these branded the British administration as Police Raj. As already said, abusing and attacking the British were the pastime of those aspired to rise up politically than trying to build up communal and social harmony within the country. Without doing so, the leaders harped on Home Rule slogan. Tilak built ~~his~~ up his Home Rule organization in April 1916, and that was christened as All India Home Rule League, by Mrs. Besant. Later she herself had another Organization by the same name, and with that began her countrywide tour stirring the masses.

Gandhi argued at that time that the British would 'give India a square deal after the war was over'. Mrs. Besant and Tilak had warned him that he was heading for disillusionment, and that the British would never part with power unless they were hard-pressed. Gandhi held good intentions about Muslims also. Thus Gandhi's thinking over the things seemed peculiar in those days and therein he built up his personality. It was said, that: [1]

> "The ideas and techniques of Gandhi————the cult of the spinning wheel, the use of the fasts for political ends, the legalistic methods of negotiation, uplift of the untouchables————all these had their roots in India for ages before the coming of the Muslims. Politics of Gandhian school, dealing so largely in gestures and symbols were too amorphous and subtle for Muslims with their creed of simple assertions."

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1. EWR. Lumby- Transfer of Power in India, & B.R.Nanda on Gandhi.

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Gandhi had a good many Muslim friends even from his South Africa days, and their association must have greatly influenced his thinking, and that was what the people found in him for many years. However, ~~though~~ Gandhi was not in the limelight in 1916, ~~xxxxxx~~ ~~by~~ but after the Benares Incident of February that year, he had become a new 'spectacle' in Indian politics. The people had some regard for him due to his South African record, and partly due to the fact that his opponent in India was a foreigner, a British woman.

When Gandhi was blurting out freely at Benares Hindu University function, a senior British officer had murmured that, 'We must stop this man from talking ~~such~~ ~~rot~~'. That was the impact of his speech while Mrs. Besant tried to cool the fire stating that the 'incident' was just a passing wave. Nevertheless, the misunderstanding and bickerings betweem Annie and Gandhi did not diminish. In an editorial in her paper, she even said that Gandhi must have fallen into 'missionary hands' and that he was trying to turn the students against her. But Gandhi denied this accusation indignantly but said that it was a fact that a meeting of the students was held at Pachayappa's Hall, Madras, under the auspices of the Hindu Association, and the hall was fully packed when he addressed them, and added that when Mrs. Besant talked on 'Students and Politics', the indication was that she had no support from that group.

These kinds of gatherings of students would not be a measuring rod to decide on the popularity of the national leaders and whosoever had been the cause to make a capital out of such things, were totally wrong. But what was true was that there had been a hitch between Annie Besant and Mohandas Gandhi, and who and what caused that, the writers of these days could spell out. Mrs. Besant's two old disciples, Ramaswami Iyer and Krishna Menon, commented on the Benares Incident and said that they ~~(xxxxxxxxxxxxxx)~~ had always 'sensed an incompatibility of temperament between Annie and Gandhi'. Even in the greatest people, they said, 'the personal element creeps in unawares, and human beings are always fallible and sometimes even small in their behaviour in the most serious situations." 2.

But this incompatibility of temperament was provoked by the younger man from the day he landed in India. Gandhi was always independent with an air of self-sufficiency. He had always wanted to lead and not willing to be led. While Annie was a realist in her politics, Gandhi had been suffering from many an illusion as well as frustration at that time. Here it is relevant to quote Gandhi. He read a long essay at the Missionary Conference in Madras on the 14th February 1916, and that was exactly eight days after the Benares Incident. At that meeting he said, that: 3.

> "My patriotism is both exclusive and inclusive. It is exclusive in the sense that in all humility, I confine my attention to the land of my birth, but it is inclusive in the sense that my service is not of a competitive and antagonistic nature."

That's the point at which one must look at. Gandhi said that his service was 'not that of competitive and antagonistic nature'. That was true as long as he himself

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2. Prof, Nethercot on Annie- Page 246,
3. Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi- Vol. 13, Page 224.

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had an upper hand in politics as in South Africa in the beginning of his career. What he betrayed, perhaps, unwittingly, was something of both competition and antagonism, and his supposed opponent was poor Mrs. Besant and for no fault of hers. At this distance of time and history, one could confidently say that Gandhi was out of tune even then. His views and methods which he pursued through the years, did not reap dividends in spite of the fact that the whole country was behind him.

Gandhi chose a wrong platform to inaugurate his political tirade against his political opponents including the British Government. While explaining himself about the situation created by himself on the 6th February 1916, at Benares, he said, rather bitterly that: 4.

> "I have seen audiences going away from boredom. I have seen speakers made to sit down but I have never seen the President himself abandon meeting like this."

Yes, that was the situation he created on that day by his irrelevant speech. Late that night the police commissioner wrote out an order for the immediate externment of Gandhi from Benares. With Malaviya's pursuasion, that didn't happen that way, and Gandhi left the city next morning. But then Gandhi gained in some ways. Emotion was the dominating factor in the whole incident, but then the future Mahatma seemed to have won some adherents to his creed. One such man was Vinoba Bhave: 5.

> "As reports of the speech spread outside, the public reacted differently from the the princes. In Benares Gandhi made a convert who out-weighed a hall-full of critics- a twenty-one year old student named Vinoba Bhave. He read the speech in the papers, wrote to Gandhi and joined the ASHRAM."

Vinoba was not alone. After Benares Incident, Gandhi's sheer uniqueness began to exert a fascination, especially, and magnificently, over some of the young. It was in 1916 that he met G.D.Birla of the industrial family, then aged twenty-two. 'Gandhi's greatness and generousity captured him against his convictions. Within a few years his money and his houses were at Gandhi's disposal.' 6.

When the Press Act was brought into operation against some belligerent presses, Mrs. was one of the first victims. In May 1916, she delivered two great speeches in Poona on 'the Future of India', when Tilak, Kelkar and most of the people of the city had gathered to listen to her in thousands. On the 27th May, Government under the Press Act, demanded security from the NEW INDIA of Mrs. Besant. She wrote a leading article bitterly criticising the Government, especially when they served notice on her and when she was on bed with fever. They required her to deposit Rs. 2,000 with the Presidency Magistrate within fourteen days.

This was followed by nation-wide protest, and Mrs. Besant was greatly encouraged. She paid the security money and continued to write as she usually did. The Benares Incident and Gandhi's seeming popularity among the younger section, caused her to be misunderstood by some people. All that made her more provocative and fierce in her work

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4. Jeoffry Ashe- on Gandhi, Page 155.
5. G.D.Tendulkar- 'Mahatma'- Vol. I, Page 183 to 187.
6. Jeoffry Ashe on Gandhi.

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against the Press Act. All over India meetings of protest were organised, editorials were written, and money was raised. The staff of her NEW INDIA presented a letter to their 'Dear Mother' assuring her 'of their devotion'. Annie made a quick trip to meet the Governor of Calcutta and later she sent an appeal to the Viceroy in June 1916. In her journal, COMMONWEAL she wrote that:

"The crucifixon of today is the coronation of tomorrow"

Dinshaw Wacha and Muhammad Ali Jinnah also joined in protesting against the Government. Mrs. Besant pointed out to the Government that they had no need to fear a 69-year old woman who had always abided by law, order and constitutional means of reform. Speaking on the 25th June 1916, at Bombay at a meeting of the citizens 'to uphold the liberty of the Press and protest against the Press Act of 1910, Gandhi said, that: 7.

> "They (the journalists) were assured that the law would be made operative against only the offending journalists. From what happened in the case of NEW INDIA, it may be said that the promise was illusory. We are here disillusioned now as to the real character of this law on account of the attack made by the Government against Annie Besant (cheers). That circumstance has awakened us to the true nature of law. Where is the security from this law when repression is practised under it on respectable journalists?"

Mrs. Besant's fight for freedom was provocative in the sense that it made the British to look upon her activities with justified surprise. While the order of the externment from the province of Bombay was passed on her, it was said that 'there are reasonable grounds for believing that Mrs. Besant had acted and is about to act in a manner prejudicial to the public safety.' A journal- THE ADVOCATE OF INDIA went so far as to urge that she be deported'. The English papers like the LONDON TIMES, ~~MANCHESTER~~ GUARDIAN etc took serious notice of the developments in India, and they ridiculed the Home Rule League in England as an 'obscure organization' of no consequence.

The different branches of the Home Rule League became active by the end of the year 1916. The 'Congress History' said that: 8.

> "Apparently Mrs. Besant was not satisfied with the tardy way in which Congress affairs were progressing. The British Committee of the Indian National Congress was, no doubt, attending to the Congress work in England--------Mrs. Besant wanted a more dynamic body and oragnised an Auxialiary Home Rule League in London in June 1916--------In India that League was founded in Madras at the Gokhale Hall (founded by Annie herself) in September 1916------."

Mohandas Gandhi was not very active in national politics at this time. He was busy in Ahmedabad in his ASHRAM. The young student of the Hindu University, Vinobha, the future Acharya, had joined his ASHRAM, and there were many others as well. Gandhi was busy with his correspondence and also lecture programmes. SWADESHI, untouchability, education through vernacular languages, hand weaving and spinning were his pet themes. He was very touchy ro public and press misrepresentations. Once he found that something that he said in Bangalore, was misreported in one of the papers of Mrs. Besant. Writing

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7. Prof. Nethercot on Annie- Page 248 & 249,
8. Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi- Vol. 13, Page 282 & History of Congress- by Dr. Pattabhi S.

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about that to his former Secretary in South Africa, a Jewish lady, on the I6th January I9I6, from Ahmedabad, he said that:

"You might at least have given me the credit for uttering no such nonsense as Mrs Besant's correspondent attributed to me. Natarajan apologised for reproducing the columny. What I did say bore a totally different construction--------."

Gandhi like Gokhale, had the idea of spiritualising politics. 'Politics divorced of religion have absolutely no meaning', he would assert. Speaking at the Missionary Conference in Madras on the I4th February I9I6, he said that: 9.

"I do not believe that religion has nothing to do with politics. The latter divorced from religion is like a corpse only fit to be buried--------Princes and potentates, whether they were Indian born or foreigners, have hardly touched the vast masses except for collecting revenue."

But Annie Besant's idea on this subject of mixing religion and politics, was most sensible and meaningful, and the time has proved that she was quite right. She said, that:

"He (Gandhi) is built for the great office, and proved it (in South Africa) by his power to lead a community into the path of passive resistance and of suffering himself 'bearing all things, enduring all things' with utter fearlessness".

"It is no disparagement of him to say that he is 'a child in politics', for his life has not led him into political ways. He had a forlorn hope, and won. That was a struggle for liberty in the political field, though full of danger and often of suffering, is active- not passive, and in that is needed the politician- not the prophet. The politician is a fighter, with the qualities and defects of his DHARMA His work is not as lofty as that of a prophet, but it is necessary, and their DHARMAs are not opposed but complementary. Politics are full of compromises, and the prophet cannot compromise--------."

This is a very realistic assessment by a very tried politician and philosopher. Annie's analytical observation was certainly clear and far-sighted. But for Gandhi, his Benares gave a new lease and booster and that was politically useful to him. Students and men in the streets were glad that Gandhi asked the 'Viceroy to go home'. That was the news although he never said so. Gandhi's telling that he was an anarchist and that he favoured anarchists, also helped him although he meant it in a different way. Thirdly, the news that he 'shook the princes' by telling them to surrender their jewellery, was welcommed by the people. And that was Gandhi, a politician but not yet a leader.

When the rest of the leaders were busy mobilising the country's support for their new wave of agitation, Gandhi was cool and, perhaps, biding time. But he wrote a lot in his YOUNG INDIA, and went about propagating his views, but on the subject of education in Indian languages, he spoke too many times and that seemed as though he was trying to break the scheme of national education initiated by Mrs. Besant. Once he said, that:

"If during the last fifty years we had been educated through the vernaculars, our elders, our servants and our neighbours would have partaken of our knowledge." IO.

This was a questionable statement. Gandhi should have known that Indian languages have been there, Indian education was also there and Indians were also there for thousands

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9. Prof. Nethercot on Annie, Pages 248, 249,
IO Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi & History of Congress.
'Mahatma' by G.D.Tendular, Page I86.

of years, and what the hell they did with all their so called 'knowledge' which was in the zero level till the British came? Gandhi should also not forget that he was the first to break the caste barrier in his community and went to England when he had all the kinds of education he wanted in his own place. Anyway it is here we see a sort of humbug that was betrayed by prophets and politicians alike.

"There were a number of political conferences during the second half of the year 1916. There was a new wave of political life in the country under the leadership of Tilak, Mrs. Besant and Muhammad Ali Jinnah." A recent Gandhian biographer wrote that: 11

> "Self-Government for India within the British empire through law abiding and constitutional means, the declared objective of the Home Rule League (of Mrs. Annie Besant), might seem tame in the light of later history, but in 1916-17, the impact of this Organization on Indian politics was swift and strong. The appeal of the movement to the educated classes was due to the fact that it answered some of their incohate aspirations, and offered an outlet to the ferment which the war had generated———."

In this there was another problem of the Hindu-Muslim relationship in the country. The Muslims were as active as the rest of the Indians, and that has been a perennial affair in the Indian history of the last one-thousand years. Mr. Tendulkar said, that:

> "The question of Hindu-Muslim relations is one of the imperial interest———When the Indian National Congress and Muslim League met in Bombay in December 1915, the Hindu-Muslim ENTENTE first began to take shape. Muhammad Ali Jinnah was active. He presided over the Muslim League conference in October 1916, held in Ahmedabad, where the Extremist Hindu politicians had taken part. The Lucknow Congress in December 1916, ~~xxxxxxx~~ presided over by Ambika Charan Mazumdar, was attended by Bepin Chandra Pal, Tilak and Mrs. Besant."

Here it is important to note about the 'Extremist Hindu Politicians'. These extremists in both the religions have always found place in all the MELAs and that aggravated the problems every time. Tilak and his extremist hoard had been there always from 1907 to 1917, and even after and that made the efforts of the most reasonable and sincere politicians useless because the extremists would always demand a big bargaining power. According to the History of Congress, we are told that: 12.

> "The Lucknow Congress (1916) was altogether a unique one for the fraternization of Hindus and Muslims———No less important was the reunion of the two wings of the Congress which had been separated since 1907. It was truly an enlivening spectacle to see Tilak and Khapparde sitting side by side with Dr. Rash Behari Ghose and S.N. Benerjie. Mrs. Besant was there with her two co-adjutors- Arundale and Wadia, the Muslim leaders including Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Gandhi and Polak were there, too."

In those days, however, no one had given a serious thought to the Hindu-Muslim problem although the problem had always been there. Among the top leaders, only Mrs. Besant had good relationship with both the religious groups and no one else. Those Hindus and Muslims had begun to suspect each other even at that time, and even from the time of Sir Syed Ahmad, the founder of the Aligarh Muslim centre. Gandhi's efforts in that direction at that time was only in the form of some tame speeches and nothing else. Even there he would remember his South Africa days, and say as he said at a meeting of the Muhammaden Association in Surat, on the 3rd January 1916, that: 13.

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11. Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya- History of Congress, & Tendelkar's 'Mahatma'.
12. Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi- Vol. 13, Page 196.
13. " " " " "

"This gathering reminds me of South Africa, where Hindus, Parsees and Muslims had become one. I find here in Surat the same bond of brotherhood between Hindus and Muslims which I have found wherever I have moved in India. From among the old friends in South Africa whom I have met here, Abdul Khadir Bawazeer shared much suffering with me---------In South Africa, Hindus and Muslims live as brothers. In a right cause, a community can win even if it fights single-handed. It is the same God, service to whom ensures our salvation-------."

This kind of lectures to Muslims and Hindus were helpful to rural people but not for the Hindu and Muslim politicians and extremists, and the latter events proved that Gandhi could not take Muslims with him. But Annie's leadership with her Home Rule banner awakened the country to realities. Tilak was a Hindu and all his talks and actions had taken a sort of communal extremism just on the lines of his GITA RAHASYA. Mrs. Besant, though an eminent translator of BHAGAVAD GITA, was a dynamic and objective organiser and agitator, and her European nationalism was an additional asset to develop Indian nationalism. In Madras, the Home Rule League discussed her 'Commonwealth of India Act'. Her newspapers continued circulation despite the forfeiture of her security deposit, the case about which was still in the High Court. Sir Subramania Iyer, the Theosophist and retired judge of the High Court, and Ramaswami Iyer, were her active associates, and others included Telang, Wadia and Arundale. About thirty branches of Home Rule League backed her leadership while Tilak was supported by only one branch, just the one which was in Poona. By September 1916, the Home Rule League branches rose up to sixty, and Annie Besant decreed the first annual celebration of the Home Rule Day, and explained why she preferred Home Rule to self-Government.

Annie's biographer, Nethercot, has found out that there was 'still enough rivalry' between her and Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the latter not willing to fight under her banner, nor did his compact body of fighters want to battle under another. Consequently in the same month of September, Tilak organised his own League, but with nice reciprocity he also joined her Home Rule for India League and Mrs. Besant joined his League as well.

Who started which LEAGUE first when all these political reciprocities and stunts were going on? Was it Mrs. Besant or Mr. Tilak? Indians prefer to give credit to an Indian and say that Tilak started first, but that's not true. It was Annie's far-sighted dynamism that initiated the term Home Rule for India as early as 1909, after her acquaintance with the ~~Irish~~ Irish Home Rule agitation and she herself was an Irish. The official history of National Congress said emphatically, that:

"Mrs. Besant was not satisfied with the tardy way in which Congress affairs were progressing-------Mrs. Besant wanted a more dynamic body and organised a Home Rule League branch in London in June 1916-----."

Even this fact given in the History of Congress by the hired writers and politicians, is not very correct. As said above, Mrs. Besant had taken her Home Rule message during her annual visit to England as early as 1909. In 1913 she strongly pleaded for Home Rule in India, at the imperial circles in London, and from then on she was certainly a Mahakali or DURGI of Indian politics, and no amount of by-passing this basic fact could help anyone.

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Annie Besant became a very effective victim of the Indian Press Act, and her NEW INDIA, the most popular national newspaper in 1916-17, was gagged and she was made to forfeit her security deposits. But she would not keep quiet and her appeal was in the High Court. Apart from Bombay Presidency, the Berar Government also passed externment order on her, and from then on both Tilak and Gandhi strongly supported her. At the Lucknow Congress in December 1916, Annie was given a grand reception, and the names of Annie and Tilak resounded everywhere, and her Home Rule programme was unanimously endorsed. The official Congress History says that:

> "On the scheme of self-Government and the educative campaign, Congress undertook propaganda. The response to this call was marvellous. One Province vied with another in carrying a propaganda and Madras, under the immediate guidance of Mrs. Besant created a record for itself----------Mrs. Besant just then was under orders of externment from Berar and Bombay--------Her daily the NEW INDIA and the Weekly COMMONWEAL, were called to furnish security, for her press and papers, and altogether she deposited and forfeited a sum of Rs. 20,000. In the meantime, the Home Rule idea was spreading like wild fire. 'The strength of the Home Rule Movement' was rendered ten-fold greater', as Mrs. Besant pointed out in her presidential address in Calcutta."

During the first half of the year 1917, the NEW INDIA carried a very hard-hitting headlines and statements. No nationalist till then in the history of the country, had given such a forthright lead as she gave. Here one should also admit that the Indians were all along mild, timid and even cowardly. They were afraid of the Government and very often their own shadows. It was Mrs. Besant who showed them how to raise their heads, and her Home Rule movement showed them the way, and the agitation gradually took a fiery character and revolutionary fervour. She wrote that: 14.

> "India no longer wants your boons, your concessions and those offers you make; India wants to be mistress in her own house--------Men who give their blood for the Empire are subject to this disgusting and degrading punishment (i.e.flogging) and it is a disgrace that men who fight like heroes should be whipped as slaves-------- Autocracy is destroyed in Russia; it is tottering in Germany; only under England's flag it is rampant-------."

These were the points that were stressed in Mrs. Besant's papers and in prominent headlines. Reginald Craddock, then Home Member, saw in them that the minds of the people were being poisoned against the British Government. The popular support to the movement increased despite the British officers ridiculing Mrs. Besant as 'a vain old lady'. That she was an old lady, was a fact, but she was not vain, and she knew what she was doing. She kept all her opponents and the Britishers dazed. She moved about, she preached, she screached, she agitated, she wrote and she stormed. She was then exactly seventy years old.

The Government of India was still thinking on how to deal with the movement, and in February 1917, the Viceroy recorded that though he was prepared to sanction a summary action against Mrs. Besant, Tilak and others of the Home Rule movement, a clear case against them had to be made, and added that: 15.

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14. The NEW INDIA & Government of India records, quoted by B.R.Nanda.
15. The New India- quoted by B.R.Nanda.

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"As we stand, it seems to me impossible on paper to draw a distinction between the self-Government which we advocate as the ultimate goal of British rule in India and Home Rule as advocated by Mrs. Besant and Tilak, though we know in fact that the two policies are poles apart. I would suggest them that our obvious course is to announce our policy with little as delay as possible and set against a visionary Home Rule scheme our sane and practical proposals."

Thus the year 1917 began with great expectations for Mrs. Besant, and she was the undisputed leader of the time. An editorial in the PUNJABEE, a north Indian journal, said that "her services will live for all time in the recollection of a grateful country."

That's true. But the country was not at all that grateful because there were others who wanted to become leaders and they told the people that they did everything for the country. Perhaps, that was one aspect of India's national character. When Mrs. Besant travelled from Calcutta to Madras, all her way she was feted with Vedic chants, camphor offerings, gaslight processions, fireworks, showers of flowers and garlands. Everywhere there were huge crowds and, in fact, it was Mrs. Besant who has been drawing crowds long before Gandhi came to the picture. No other Indian leader, king or emperor of the past, had drawn such crowds till then. Wherever Mrs. Besant went, crowds gathered in enormous numbers and cheered her in profound admiration. She was so much over-confident in her work that she now began to prophecy with certainty that she would not die before India became free. I6.

The Home Rule agitation took a militant form, and it had an electric effect all over the country. The Government of India as well as the provincial governments could not ignore the intensity of the movement led by 'a vain old lady'. The Viceroy Lord Chelmsford telegraphed to the Secretary of State for India, on the I8th May I917 'urging an early declaration in regard to the constitutional and administrative changes, if the possibilities of dangerous unrest in India were to be avoided and support secured from the 'influential though timid, unorganised and comparatively inarticulate body of opinion which is opposed to and afraid of any sudden and violent changes in the construction, and looks to Government for support against extremist propaganda'. That in the asking for this declaration from His Majesty's Government, the Viceroy did not envisage any radical changes in the immediate future, was made clear in a subsequent telegram of the IIth June--------.' I7.

In the telegram sent for the second time, 'it was said that there was a need to the development of free institutions with a view to ultimate self-Government', and then it also stressed that the declaration should be clear on the point that it was a distant gola, and not of immediate future.'

When all these things took place in India with the 'vain old lady' Mrs. Besant raising storm all over and shaking the foundation of the British empire with her Home Rule movement, one had to search for Gandhi as to where he was at that time and what he was doing. Maybe, he was at his Sabaramati Ashram at Ahmedabad, and also going round lecturing on SWADESHI, untouchability, hand-weaving, education in Indian languages and

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I6. Prof. Nethercot- from the COMMONWEAL; I7. B.R.Nanda on Gandhi, Page I53.

and so on. He had expressed his aversion to speech-making and yet he was doing only that. After he showed himself on the 6th February 1916 at Benares where he created an 'incident' which gave him a booster, though misguided it was, he was not seen anywhere till April 1917 when the Home Rule agitation was going on, nor did he take part in the agitation. Gandhi was not in the negotiations that led to the Lucknow Pact of December 1916, between the Congress and Muslim League. That showed that he was 'largely isolated from the main currents of Indian politics. It was not Gandhi but the Mrs. Besant-Tilak combination which dominated the political scene and impressed the Government to think of 'the ultimate self-Government'.

Thus from the year 1913 to 1917, till Mrs. Besant showed herself as an indispensable character in Indian politics, it was wholly her day, and for twenty years from 1893 to 1913, she had worked her way up very remarkably, and successfully, too!

The Home Rule movement that began in early 1917, was intensified within a month or two. "With Annie's remarkable power of seizing the psychological moment, she fastened on the catchword- 'Home Rule for India' quite early in the war, and formed a league for its promotion. She gave this vague term the widest interpretation in her daily newspaper, NEW INDIA. It was during this wave of fervour that the 'old lady of Adyar', as she was then called, was denied access to some of the provinces-------." 18.

Mrs. Besant had a large number of followers all over India. One of the thousands of unknown Home Leaguers, was Jawaharlal Nehru, who had joined as a member of both the Leagues of Tilak as well as Mrs. Besant, but he 'worked especially for Mrs. Besant. Along with Tilak, this indomitable 69-year old Irish woman--------galvanised Indian politics into renewed life." 19.

Gandhi kept himself out of the Home Rule movement. Mrs. Besant tried to enlist his support, but failed. Perhaps, Gandhi must have been under the impression that his assumption that the British were good and that they would part with power soon after the war. When the British were in trouble he had been supporting them. He did so in 1899, 1906 and 1914. So in 1917 he thought that he could stick to his dictum. This apart, Gandhi had always felt to lead and not to be led. He must have been also thinking why after all he should join a movement engineered by his potential rival- a lady!

But Mrs. Besant had the country behind her. In May 1917 she inspired the Women's Indian Association, and she saw that a network of branches of that Association was built up all over the country. Another British lady who assisted her in this great movement, was Mrs. Margaret Cousins, wife of the Irish Theosophist and poet, James H. Cousins- both of whom had come to India 'under the inspiration and example of Mrs. Annie Besant'. During those busy days, Mrs. Besant had pursuaded Rabindranath Tagore to be the honorary Chancellor of her National University, but he did little in that direction.

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18. The London Times- the 21st September 1933.
19. Frank Moraes- on J.Nehru, Page 51.

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As the movement was going on in full swing, Mrs. Besant's husband, Frank Besant died at Sibsey, England, in April 1917. Till then he had lived 'in obscurity and antiquarian eccesiastical research for all these years, trying to ignore the stories of his wife's fame which he could not help reading in the newspapers. His funeral was attended by his son Digby who was in close touch with his mother. The daughter Mable Scot was then at Adyar with her mother, and Mable's daughter Nuriel was in England. Muriel had married George Herman Shapiro- a young violinist. Mable's husband Scott had dropped out of the picture by this time. 20.

During the Home Rule agitation, Mrs. Besant had some interviews with Lord Pentland, the Governor of Madras, who wanted to see that all talk of Home Rule ended, and 'offered her a safe conduct to England for the duration of the war. She naturally refused. At the end of the conference, she informed him politely that she bore him no personal animosity, but as a parting shot remarked that she was striking the deadliest possible blow against the British empire in India'. Accordingly, the branches of her Home Rule League were opened all over India with more than 150 offices and more than 10,000 members. C.P. Ramaswami Iyer was the spirit behind this expansion of the League, while the Governor of Madras warned that he was going to take every possible measure against the agitation.

The movement, however, spread all over India like wildfire. The people in cities marched, women came out of their homes for the first time in Indian history, and the peasants were alerted. Those were the days of great excitement. By the 14th June 1917, Mrs. Besant's political fate had been decided. As a first step, the Madras Government expelled her associates- Wadia and Arundale, from Madras and forbade them to engage in public activities. On the 16th June, the Inspector-General of Police, and others of the Intelligence department served warrants- first on Arundale and then on Wadia in the city offices of the daily NEW INDIA. They were also given seven days time to get to Ootacmund Later, Mrs. Besant was also arrested and 'on the morning of the 21st June, she was given a tumultuous send off when she arrived at the central station after being arrested. She was taken to the Nilgiries where Col. Olcott had built a small but comfortable house which was later owned by Wadia. Wadia and Arundale stole out of Adyar in 'the dead of night' and took train at a wayside station and joined Mrs. Besant at Ootacmund.

From that day, the 20th of June, the NEW INDIA did not come out. P.K.Telang as Editor, issued pamphlets. The Weekly COMMONWEAL was bought by B.R.Reddy, and the journal THEOSOPHIST was in charge of Jinarajadasa. So also the ADYAR BULLETIN.

During this period of intense mass agitation for Home Rule, Gandhi was away from the field, and he had his own excuse for that. Gandhi always wanted to be a leader and he was not the one to be led. He attended the Lucknow Congress in 1916, as an observer and 'in the hope of getting acquainted with his fellow-countrymen'. It was during that

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20. Prof. Nethercot on Annie- Page 254, &
Robert Payne on Gandhi.

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time he was introduced to the subject of the plight of indigo workers in Champaran, Bihar. Later in March 1917, a Biharee cultivator, Rajkumar Shukla, invited Gandhi to visit the place. As a result of that, Gandhi travelled with Shukla from Calcutta to Behar. ~~later in March 1917~~ "On the 7th April 1917, looking like two poverty-stricken peasants, they took the train for Patna". It was then Rajendra Prasad came in contact with Gandhi who wrote about his experience saying that:

> "The man who brought me here does not know anything. He has dumped me in some obscure place. The master of the house is away and the servants take us both to be beggars. They don't even permit us the use of latrine———I have swallowed a good many insults, and the queer situation here does not trouble me. If things go on like this, I am not likely to see Champaran———."

When the whole country was plunged in a national movement for Home Rule, Gandhi took to this kind of- what? gimmick?- of working in an obscure place, perhaps to show that his discretion was better than that of others, and his job was more pressing than the national Home Rule movement. Gandhi was nothing but a politician with a design of his own but always posing and talking differently from what he had actually intended. But then the Indians were in need of a leader in a brand new make up and of their own race and colour, and they saw at a later stage that Gandhi fitted in there and the latter too thought that the people would buy his ways and postures than of any foreigner. That was why he was moving away from Annie Besant's national movements.

In Patna Gandhi saw his old friend of London, the local Muslim leader- Maulana Nazharul Huq who was of some help to him. While he was there, he stayed with Rajendra Prasad who had met him for the first time. At Muzaffarpur, Gandhi was received by the local people in the midnight 'like a king'. Prof. J.B.Kripalani of the local Government College, had taken all his students with him to the station on the occasion. There he stayed in the house of Prof. Kripalani. He met also a good many British officials in Muzaffarpur. On the 15th April 1917, Gandhi set out set out for Motihari and from there an elephant ride took him to Chandrahia- a village. It was here the local district magistrate, W.B.Haycock, served notice 'of expulsion on Gandhi on the grounds that his continued presence in the district endangered public peace.'

But Gandhi refused to be expelled, and rejected the expulsion notice outright. He wrote that:

> "Out of a sense of public responsibility, I feel it to be my duty to say that I am unable to leave this district but if it so pleases the authorities, I shall submit to the order by suffering the penalty of disobedience."

Here one can see that Gandhi was inviting, rather deliberately inviting trouble for himself in the name of serving the country. This was what was called for Gandhi's lust for self-aggrandizement. In that Gandhi was so much filled up with self-importance he wouldn't join others or other national leaders among whom he would not be able to secure a prominent place, and, therefore, he created situations or opportunities of this sort. From this point, it is interesting to watch Gandhi and his antics which were bitterly criticised by the rest of the lederly Indian leaders of the time.

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Rajendra Prasad wrote many years later on 'how Gandhi had come to Behar like a stranger from another planet. Everything about him was strange. There was his strange appearence, his strange habits and strange methods of work. He seemed to be living on a diet of groundnuts and dates, with occasional rice and boiled vegetables and bread'. He woke up everyday morning at 4 a.m., wore handspun cloth, walked very fast that others had difficulty to keep pace with him. His knowledge of Hindi was limited."

"Champaran is a comparatively unknown district, north-west of the province of Behar. Nearly a hundred years ago there had come to it a host of indigo planters who gradually began to have a hold on the peasantry and to force them to grow indigo, even though this was not profitable to the peasants. Other cultivation suffered in consequence and the wages from indigo cultivation were very nominal. On a few occasions the cultivator had rebelled against this compulsion, but all such uprisings were seberely crushed. Now the trouble began when synthetic dyes made indigo cultivation almost valueless and the planters had to close down their factories. There were heavy losses also, but there was a compulsory enhancement of rent. The tenants protested, but the interests of the planters were protected by the Government, and the peasants dared not seek any judicial remedy without seriously endangering their property and person."

It seems that Gandhi went to Champaran because the peasants had sent word to the Congress of the oppression they suffered. He found the complaint similar to that of the indentured labourers of South Africa. He determined to take up the challenge, and that was his first experiment of passive resistance in India. When he was 'firmly but politely' advised to leave the district, that made him more obdurate. Gandhi's plan began to work, say his admirers. Madan Mohan Malaviya, an elder Congress leader, was contacted. Charles Andrews, the last of the English nationalists in India, and a personal friend of Gandhi, was summoned, and, with the rest of the co-workers, Gandhi marched to Champaran disobeying the quit notice of the Government. The very next day Gandhi was put to trial and he pleaded guilty.

When Gandhi pleaded guilty to the charge, everyone was amazed because those were the tactics which were not heard of by anyone till then. The English authorities viewed with suspicion a prisoner who 'deliberately defied an order and then pleaded guilty to the charge. That had been the Gandhian technic all along. Gandhi made his first statement in an Indian court explaining his reasons for disobeying the order. He said that:

> "As a law-abiding citizen, my first instinct would be to obey an ~~xxxxx~~ order served upon me. But I could not do so without my first instinct would be to obey an order served upon me. But I could not do so without doing violence to my sense of duty towards those for ~~xxxx~~ whom I have come."

Later in the same statement, Gandhi revealed his self-assurance. Though unknown at that time, Gandhi said at the trial, that: 21.

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21. D.F.Karaka- 'Out of Dust'.

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"I am fully consciousoof the fact that a person holding in the public life in India a position such as I do, has to be most careful in setting an example".

These kinds of utterances in the India of those days were certainly alarming, to an extent of sounding strange. It was said that 'coming events had cast their shadows before. Yet the above statement was not without its little philosophy', said a Gandhian biographer of Gandhi who said in the court that:

"I have disregarded the order served upon me not for want of respect for lawful authority but in obedience to the higher law of our being, the voice of conscience."

The magistrate looked a trifle perplexed at what Gandhi said on the law of God and the voice of conscience which was never cited in a court of law till then.

"Could a case based on the law of God be tried in his court of Champaran? If so by whom and how? He fumbled with the books of reference. He had always been given to understand that the High Court of Justice was the Supreme Court———."

Faced with this dilemma, the magistrate thought it proper to postpone judgment, and on the following day, he informed Gandhi that he had received instructions from the authorities to withdraw the case.

No doubt, the whole country was reclieved with surprise by this decision of the Government. Gandhi's name began to echo after that. Champaran was the place where he had first shown his mettle as well his technic of passive resistance movement. He wrote to the officer who had signed his quit order from that district, that:

"Reformers like myself, who have no other axe to grind but that of reform they are handling for the time being, specialise and create a force which the Government must reckon with. Reformers may go wrong by being over-zealous, indiscreet, or indolent and ignorant. The Government may go wrong————I hope, in this case, neither catastrophe will take place, and the grievances————already submitted and which are mostly admitted, will be effectively redressed."

"In those days Gandhi was far from being familiar figure he became later. He was not an impressive or an imposing figure at the Congress which was largely dominated by Tilak, Mrs. Besant and Jinnah. Wearing an enormous Kathiawar turban, and with a long black moustache, he looked more like a successful merchant from Gujarat than a man who had led the Indians in South Africa against the entrenched power of the Government." 22.

This was Gandhi of the Champaran movement. He had kept away from the ,ain current of the Indian political movement, especially from the Home Rule agitation, despite the efforts of Annie Besant to bring him round. Gandhi settled in Ahmedabad in the middle of the year 1917, and was busy in constructive activities at Sabaramati ASHRAM. Writing to Fulachand Shah from Motihari on the 30th June 1917, Gandhi said, that: 23.

"I gave you one letter of Mrs. Besant to keep. I am sending you another. I hope that your are preserving cuttings from the papers there————."

Thus it was clear that Gandhi was in touch with Mrs. Besant although he was away from her movement, and for that the reasons are not too difficult to unravell. There are

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22. Robert Payne- on Gandhi: Page 304,
23. Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi- Vol. 13.

several instances for Gandhi's self-assertion and independence of spirit, and the foremost one was that concerning his relationship with Gokhale and the SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY. Gokhale was well-disposed towards Gandhi only on the personal level. In 1915, in the month of January, Gandhi went to Poona to see Gokhale who was ill. What happened on that occasion was said as under: 24.

> "Gokhale summoned all the members of the SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY to meet Gandhi hoping that they would agree to let him become a member of the SOCIETY--------but not all the members shared Gokhale's judgment of Gandhi. Some thought of him as willful and uncompromising; he would no sooner have joined the SOCIETY then he would be laying down new laws, announcing new goals and taking full command. Gokhale threw his weight in Gandhi's favour, but at the last moment Gandhi withdrew his candidacy. He had the good sense to realise that he would never rest content in another man's Organization. He must be in command or perish."

Indeed, that was how Gandhi finally showed himself and ended himself. After Gokhale's death, Gandhi attended a memorial meeting in the Company of Lord Willingdon. By then it was clear that the 'SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY did not want Gandhi, and the members were a little averse to his views and ways. Gokhale had given some money to Gandhi to settle the latter's Phoenix-mates at Shaniniketan, and it was then Gandhi met Tagore for ~~settle~~ the first time in 1915. Charles Andrews was then a teacher in Shantiniketan. Andrews and Gandhi were close friends. Andrews called Gandhi Mohan and Gandhi called him Charlie. Anyway if Gokhale and others found Gandhi as said above, how did the poet Rabindranath Tagore find him. Here we see: 25.

> "Tagore had a great admiration for Gandhi, but he was not uncritical; he was disturbed by the element of fanaticism that he detected in Gandhi and a certain violence and intemperateness of speech."

So these are 'the elements of weakness' in Gandhi, that he betrayed, as was already seen, in his Benares speech in February 1916, by his reference to the law of God, voice of conscience etc, at the court of Champaran, and from his calculated plan to keep away from Mrs. Besant's Home Rule movement. It was no wonder that Gandhi had cherished the idea of being 'in command or perish', and that stand of his made him a fanatic, violent and intemperate person, and that was what Tagore had detected in him and so also those members of the SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY.

The damning weakness of Gandhi was that he could hardly reconcile with the views and methods of others, and he treated Annie Besant as his opponent. In that way Gandhi was not at all fair to her, her personal standing, her great service for the country and for her international reputation. However, with that negative stand, Gandhi started to commit some blunders as well despite his talents to quickly admit them only to regain the goodwill of common men. But all the national leaders of those days had their own reservations in respect of Gandhi's methods and policies, and all that was evident from what happened a few years later!

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24. Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi- Vol. I3,
25. Robert Payne- on Gandhi- Pages 288 to 290.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MONTAGUE CHELMSFORD REFORMS.

The Home Rule agitation continued to gain momentum from June 1917, with the Governor of Madras, Lord Pentland's effort to gag the movement by an order of internment of Besant and her co-workers. This action of the Government, no doubt, intensified the agitation although there was no hindrance to war effort. The leaders told the people to help Britain, and B.G.Tilak asked the youngmen to join the Army, and said, that:

"We need the protection of England even as a matter of pure self-interest".

Gandhi, of course, had held to his opinion as he did on such occasions, and even started recruiting men for the Army. The All India Congress Committee appointed a small deputation with Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Srinivasa Sastri, Tej Bahadur Sapru and Wazir Hassan to proceed to England and to ask for a pledge by the Imperial government, 'in unequivocal terms to the policy of making India a self-governing member of the British empire.' B.G. Tilak's voice ~~was~~ reigned supreme here.

During the war, all the nationalists including Mrs. Besant, had demanded freedom as a condition precedent to India's unreserved participation in the war effort. By that time a large number of people had courted arrest, and they included the Ali brothers, Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali and Maulana Azad. Tilak had disagreed with all those who sought to bring about the release of Mrs. Besant merely by prayers and petitions. "If we want to prove how keenly we feel for her," he said, "let us elect her President of the coming Congress." 1.

The impact of the arrests of Mrs. Besant and others, was such that the British Government viewed the whole situation with great concern. Within a few days the Home Rule movement spread all over India, and forced the Secretary of State for India, Sir Edwin Montague, to say that: 2.

> "I particularly like Shiva who cut his wife into fifty-two pieces, only to discover that he had fifty-two wives. This is really what happened to the Government of India when it interned Mrs. Besant."

Another report about the incident said that: 3.

> "Mrs. Besant's internment created hot resentment in India, and it provoked a strong demand for passive resistance. On the 14th July 1917, a special session of the Madras Provincial Congress Committee adopted a resolution in favour of passive resistance to unjust and unconstitutional orders inhibiting constitutional agitation."

A joint meeting of the national leaders wanted to plan for a campaign of passive resistance in order to secure the release of the Home Rule movement internees. During that time, in 1917, Sir Edwin Montague recorded in his diary, that:

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1. G.D.Tendulkar- 'Mahatma'- page 215,
2. Sir Edwin Montague's diary.
3. Kodanda Rao on V.S.Srinivasa Sastri.

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"Tilak was at the moment probably the most powerful man in India."

Writing about Gandhi, his impression was of 'a social reformer with a real desire to find grievances and to cure them not for any resons of self-advertisement but to improve the conditions of fellow-men. He dresses like a coolie, forswears all personal advancement, lives practically on the air and is a pure visionary."

When Mrs. Besant was interned, some of her followers met Gandhi and asked his help to secure her release. His suggestion was that about one-hundred volunteers should walk one-thousand miles from Bombay to Ootacmund. Thus Gandhi was a visionary, and it was difficult to understand him by those extremists and moderates. "The fact ~~was~~ that he was so close to Gokhale could not add to his popularity with the extremists who may have respected him for his African record."

It was also reported that when Mrs. Besant was arrested, Shankarlal Banker went to Gandhi and asked for the latter's help in securing her release. He said, "We want you to speak at a mass meeting to free Mother Besant." Gandhi quietly replied that he "cannot do this". Shankarlal interpreted: "I know that some ill-feeling was created by the way in which Mrs. Besant treated you in Benares, but we must remember what she has done for India. One must forgive," he added.

Gandhi took this affront with perfect calm and said: "I was not thinking of that, but ask yourself what you want to accomplish to help Mother Besant. To make any progress- we must not make speeches and organise meetings but be prepared for mountains of suffering."

During this interview Anasuya Sarabhai was there. Shankarlal conveyed to the Home Rule League the suggestion of Gandhi to start SATYAGRAHA campaign for Mrs. Besant's release. Anasuya Sarabhai volunteered to join the movement and signed the SATYAGRAHA pledge. A branch of the League was formed in Ahmedabad. 4.

When Gandhi's reaction seemed to have been somewhat cool towards the projected plans for the release of Mother Besant, Bal Gangadhar Tilak strongly pressed upon the All India Congress Committee in July 1917, his proposal to elect Mrs. Besant as President of the next session of the Congress 'irrespective of whether she was released or not, as a mark of their appreciation of her great services to the Indian cause'. It was said that many moderates did not like the proposal. But one liked it or not, Tilak's proposal was taking shape, and the British Government found the personality of their prisoner, Mrs. Annie Besant, as formidable.

~~When Mrs. Besant was interned, some of her followers met~~ During those months of intense Home Rule agitation, in May and June 1917, Madras, Bombay and Bengal Governments issued orders prohibiting students in schools and colleges from taking part in politics. In that Gandhi's course of action proved to have been greatly unethical and uncalled for. He was telling officials 'to walk out of their offices'. Mrs. Besant, although in jail,

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4. B.R.Nanda on Gandhi &
Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi- Vol. 13.

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would not have liked Gandhi's idea of asking the officials to boycott work. That according to her and many others as well, was considered as a violent measure of a man who was professing non-violence. Nevertheless, Gandhi tried in his own way for the release of Mrs. Besant. Writing to Jahangir B. Petit, on the 30th June 1917, from Motihari, Gandhi said, that:

> "I do hope that whatever shape our action takes, the time limit resolution will be accepted by you and our friend, not that we will not rest until the interned (Mrs. Besant and others) are released."

Speaking at the meeting of businessmen at Ahmedabad, on the 24th August 1917, Gandhi demanded the release of Mrs. Besant and her co-workers. This meeting was held under the auspices of the local Home Rule League, and Gandhi presided over that. Several such meetings were held all over India to demand the release of Mrs. Besant. In Allahabad, Dr. Bhagavan Das conducted public meetings, and money-raising funds were started. Photographs of the 'interned three' were put on sale. The old vow of SWADESHI advocated by Mrs. Besant in her 'COMMONWEAL journal, was revived. In Madras, Besant Swadeshi Stores and Home Rule Swadeshi Stores were established. Motilal Nehru joined the Allahabad branch of the League and became its very active member.

Several weeks of internment did not affect the old lady's health and, therefore, the three were shifted to the warmer climate in Coimbatore. It was said, that: 5.

> "When the change still did not help Mrs. Besant, some of the members of the Bombay Home Rule group determined to ask Gandhi for assistance in getting her out. It was then Gandhi began to apply to India his principles of passive resistance, 'soul force', and self-suffering, and evolved a scheme to call for a hundred volunteers, true and faithful, to make a walking pilgrimage of the thousand miles from Bombay to Coimbatore, in the conviction that this spectacular expedition would force her release. When the others were sceptical about that and the value of that sort of of political agitation, Gandhi dropped the idea."

Here one should note Gandhi's amateurish experiments. In fact, he was still groping in the dark. There was no report if he had voiced his protests against the internment of Mrs. Besant and others except that he addressed the above said meeting, and that he thought of a walking demonstration. This walking business just like his fasting technique, which Mrs. Besant didn't like, was not appreciated by several others, also. Gandhi was only in a stage of brooding as to how he would or could reach people on his own and without following anyone.

While in internment, Mrs. Besant devised a Home Rule flag of green and red, to represent the Muslim and Hindu sections of the population, and that was the first flag of the National Congress. A white section with a spinning wheel was added to that to symbolise minorities and the importance of cottage industries programmes. She hoisted the flag in her prison quarters on the top of the house, when outside her dwellings and in the whole of India, relentless struggle was going on to get her released. The reaction to her arrest was instantaneous and overwhelming. Horniman and Kelkar wrote fighting editorials. The well known barrister and the President of Tilak's Home Rule

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5. Kanji Dwarakadas- quoted by Nethercot.

League, Joseph Baptista of Bombay, and E.L.Iyer of Madras, announced that they would proceed to England to argue the case. Muhammad Ali Jinnah cabled to Chamberlain protesting against those internments. Thus the Home Rule agitation provided 'a powerful impulse for the famous declaration of August 1917, that the policy of His Majesty's Government was that of increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of a responsible Government in India as an integral part of the British Empire."

Soon after Sir Edwin Montague, the Secretary of State for India, made his above declaration of responsible Government, V.S.Srinivasa Sastri cabled him to release Mrs. Besant. Montague's declaration of the 20th August 1917, had pointed out that:

> "The progress in this policy can only be achieved by successive stages, and ample opportunities will be offered for public discussion of the proposals which will be submitted in due course to the Parliament."

However, it was in pursuance of this policy, Mrs. Besant was released on the 16th September 1917. After that the proposal of passive resistance movement against the internments, was dropped. 6.

Soon after her release, Annie took over her editorial duties of her COMMONWEAL and NEW INDIA papers from Telang, Jinarajadasa and others. Wadia also resumed his editorial work. Later Mrs. Besant "resumed another whirlwind speaking tour of the country, partly to propagandise for her Home Rule League, partly to prepare the ground for Montague's coming, and partly to work for her new National University plan. Wadia and Arundale accompanied her as fellow-martyrs." Wherever they went, they were received with wild enthusiasm, and VANDE MATARAM was sung everywhere as a sort of battle song. Annie Besant contacted all other national leaders during her tour. Tilak, Sarojini Naidu, Gandhi and others met her at Bombay. At Allahabad, Motilal Nehru brought his son also with him to meet her. Jinnah, the President of the Bombay Home Rule League also saw her:

> "The tremendous reception she got in Bombay was eclipsed by the joy she felt at being able to pay homage to India's grand-old-man Naoroji who was in his sick bed. The old man declared himself that he was thankful 'the West had given the East so brilliant a leader."

A few days before that at a meeting held in Allahabad, it was decided to send an all India deputation to the Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India, and accordingly, Tilak, Gandhi, Jinnah, Sapru and Motilal Nehru waited on Lord Chelmsford and Mr. Montague. The Montague Mission arrived in India in November 1917 and began its work. Mrs, Besant carried a garland of flowers and asked Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy, if she might put it round her neck. He refused, but took it in his hands. Tilak, who was also with her with a garland, did not want to be refused. He put his garland round Edwin Montague's neck without any preliminaries. Both Tilak and Mrs. Besant were of the opinion that the Reforms had been assured mainly because of the untiring efforts of Mr. Montague, the Secretary of State for India.

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6. Prof. Nethercot- on Annie,
and George Arundale- quoted.

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Mrs. Besant, in the meantime, desired to take the rest of the nationalists with her in her activities, and she also knew that Gandhi was her potential rival who used to keep aloof from the Home Rule League, although he had acknowledged the fact that Mrs. Besant had "made Home Rule a MANTRA in every cottage in India, let alone the towns and cities." Both she and Gandhi had birthdays in October, when she wrote to inform him of the congratulatory resolution passed by the citizens of Madras on his birthday. Gandhi replied to her with a note of thanks saying that he had not heard of the action before, whereupon Mrs. Besant wrote gracefully in her NEW INDIA, that:

> "We do not expect M.K.Gandhi to remember anything about himself; he is too full of the helping of others. But we, who profit by his selfless devotion, cannot share his forgetfulness. That which is noble in him would be ignoble in us."

That must have been her politics. She was in need of cooperation of everyone, including that of the rising Gandhi. In 1916-17, Ernest Wood, Gordon Pearce and herself were busy introducing Scout movement in India. When Baden-Powell visited India, he got the Indian Boy Scouts' Association in the country, and Mrs. Besant became its chief with an uniform of Chief Scout. By that time, her scheme of National Education had already succeeded with the starting of a number of schools and a few colleges at many parts of the country. But Gandhi again did not seem to have been cooperating with that. When Ernest Wood called on him at Ahmedabad to persuade him to join the other Indian leaders in backing the new Society for the promotion of National Education, Gandhi had refused because he would not approve of a scheme which glorified the fruits of modern science that appealed to young Indians to develop modern industrial and commercial organizations and factories instead of encouraging handwork and cottage industries. So Ernest Wood went to Sind, where under the auspices of the Theosophical Society, founded a National Educational College. 7.

What was the idea of Gandhi in refusing to offer his helping hand for the National Education scheme? His explanation for his refusal was not at all satisfactory. One need not use harsh language here but yet one could think harshly on the stand taken by a man, a crank in the making, and who was trying to become a leader on his own. Gandhi's individualism was childish, to say the least. He was thinking that the programmes initiated by him alone were good and not those of others. But then he was playing politics also to move with the times. Ernest Wood recalled that 'Gandhi's monster petition' for Home Rule continued to circulate, and by November 1917, had collected close to 700,000 signatures'. 8.

Tributes to Annie's leadership poured from all over the world. George Bernard Shaw wrote 'Mrs. Besant's passage through the Fabian Society', George Lansbury on 'Mrs. Besant as a politician', Sir S.Subramania Iyer on Mrs. Besant 'an an Empire Builder', Jinarajadasa on 'Mrs. Besant's poems' which she wrote as early as 1875, and many others on qualities of her. In the meantime, she was preparing for the reception of the Secretary of State, Mr. Montague, who was due to land in Bombay on the 9th November 1917.

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7. Annie- by Prof. Nethercot, Page 268,
8. The NEW INDIA- November- 1917, quoted by Nethercot.

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She prepared the country to meet the challenge. Her editorial was, "What Will You Say to Mr. Montague?" in her journal COMMONWEAL. She went to Delhi and joined the joint deputation of Congress, Muslim League and the two Home Rule Leagues, on the 26th Nov.1917.

Montague's diary and Kanji Dwarakadas's articles on Mrs. Besant give the account of her meeting Mr. Montague in advance, and how she convinced the Secretary of State the necessity for a constitutional reform. Montague wrote that he had 'immense self-respect for her character and influence', and also said that she 'really impressed me tremendously' Women's franchise was another item in her representation to Edwin Montague.

It was already said that Bal Gangadhar Tilak had proposed the name of Mrs. Besant for the presidentship of the Congress when she was still in detention. When votes were taken in that connection, Mrs. Besant secured overwhelming majority of votes for the year's presidentship. The Bombay vote was typical of the contest, giving 64 for Mrs. Besant, three votes for Madan Mohan Malaviya, one vote for Tilak and just one vote for Mohandas Gandhi. That showed where exactly the Indians were in the leadership contest. By the end of August 1917, all the provinces except Bengal had declared for Mrs. Besant. Rabindranath Tagore praised Mrs, Besant's 'noble courage' in pushing Home Rule in spite of disagreement with her on some points.

Annie's leadership and her fight for the cause of India certainly moved the British Government to action. On her release from the detention, she and her companions reached Madras and a triumphal procession followed from the railway station to Adyar. At Gokhale Hall her portrait was garlanded. At the other end of the empire, Prime Minister Lloyd George appointed that 'brilliant Jew, Edwin S. Montague as the new Secretary of State for India', and the latter promised to go thoroughly into the Indian situation, and, accordingly, he had already undertaken a journey to India and he was well-received by the national leaders. Gandhi's 'monster petition' for Home Rule was scheduled to be presented to him on arrival in Bombay. Mrs. Besant wired the Viceroy in Simla that she was 'ready to cooperate in obtaining a calm atmosphere during Mr. Montague's visit.'.

That was the direct result and impacy of Annie's leadership. The Home Rule MANTRA which she conceived in 1909, began to sprout in 1913, and actually began to grow with the founding of the Home Rule Leagues by Tilak and Mrs. Besant. The first speech on Home Rule was delivered at Belgaum on the 1st of May, 1916. Later Mr. Besant visited Poona and spoke at a meeting when Tilak presided. She told the people to take full advantage of Mr. Bonar Law's exhortation to the colonies 'to strike while the iron is hot'. Tilak agreed with her and said, 'the time has come when we must concentrate on the single demand for Home Rule. The days of asking for piece-meal reforms are gone."

Therefore, now with the coming of the Secretary of State for India to this country for the first time in 1917, Mrs. Besant's dynamic efforts began to bear fruits in the form of Montague-Chelmsford Reforms. This was no doubt a gigantic task of one devoted and strong-willed lady- Annie Besant. She was now the President of the Congress for

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the year and was the fifth and the last Britisher to be elevated to the position. When the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms were announced, she was the happiest person, and the Congress too welcommed it when it said that the responsible Government as the goal of British policy in India.

The 1917 sessions of the Congress was held in Calcutta, on the 26th December. All 4,690 delegates were present apart from some thousands of spectators. Mrs. Besant's paper, NEW INDIA, proudly recorded the lavish preparations made for the largest convention in Indian history. A great pandal accommodated some 9,000 delegates and spectators, and it was constructed like a Roman amphitheatre. Annie Besant herself sent despatches about her reception on the 24th December. A mammoth triumphal procession was ready for her. The scene was described thus: 9.

"The volunteers wore brilliant sashes and headgear of green, yellow, orange and crimson. To Mrs. Besant it seemed like one huge sea of heads. Red and green flags fluttered everywhere. When Mrs. Besant and her co-workers arrived in Calcutta, the COMMONWEAL estimated that some 300,000 people joined the procession in their honour, and their carriage was drawn by sixteen horses. On their way at Benares, the whole sacred Kashi was 'illuminated for them, and there was unparalleled enthusiasm also in spite of her enemies there, among whom included the members of the European Association in Calcutta who telegraphed the Secretary of State for India that the reversal of the order by the Madras Government for the internment of Mrs. Besant is a dangerous measure, and renders the position of the Madras Government impossible."

However, on the day of the presidential convention at the Congress sessions, Mrs. Besant entered the pandal, and then there was a thunderous ovation- all rising from their seats. Tilak also got an ovation. About 400 ladies were present. Girls sang the national songs. Wadia, Kharpadia and Mrs. Naidu addressed the audience. Mrs. Besant took fifty minutes to read her speech, but then she dropped some passages as printed copies of the entire speech was distributed. The comments on her speech were very many. THE TIMES, London, expressed amazement that the Congress could elect as its spokes-woman 'an elderly English lady' who declared the necessity of Home Rule for India, and concluded saying that 'the Indians obviously had no suitable candidate of their own for leader'.

But the NEW INDIA edited by 'the elderly English lady' indignantly denied this charge of having no other leader among Indians although the Indians were trying to push themselves up for leadership. The passage which Annie stressed on reading her presidential address was that unlike the previous presidents of the Congress, it was not one day's or one week's job. She proclaimed her conviction that the President of the National Congress should hold active office until a successor took over at the next annual meeting, and warned the organization members that she should expect their vigorous support in the campaign for Home Rule. It was a dynamic conception of her office. 10.

Some people advised her to remove the above-said point from her address thinking that Indians might resent or be scared thinking that she might get too powerful. But her strong-mindedness was wonderful. She stuck to her views, and later what she said

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9. Annie- by Prof. Nethercot, Page 266.
10. " " " " 272-273.

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and did became a regular practice with all the Congress presidents. Gandhi was present but 'stayed carefully in the background and took little part in the proceedings.' Two days later he presided over a small new Organization, the all India Social Service Conference. Mrs. Besant undertook her Home Rule Campaign later on but the moot point was if she had really got down to the masses although people flocked to see her. However, ultimately she had to give place to others as a leader but that perhaps was it because she was a woman, a Britisher, a Theosophist or a politician with 'wrong principles', asked her biographer. J. Nehru seemed to have told that it was because of her wrong principles, as though this man had any principles at all. But here one can rightly conclude that Mrs. Besant had to withdraw because of her old age and also due to her being a Britisher, when Indians needed a 'god' of their own and not one of foreign-make. That was a time when there was a great campaign going on for SWADESHI goods. Moreover, when Mrs. Besant spoke to the illiterate millions she felt that she 'didn't get through them at all'. She could not reach the masses through English language. The poor people 'revered her as a goddess' as they knew very well that she was stirring the masses into action and into fervent nationalism.

The Montague-Chelmsford Reforms, no doubt, was a direct outcome of the Home Rule movement but very few of the national leaders were pleased with that. Mrs. Besant herself described the 'Reforms', published in July 1918 as 'leading to a line beyond which its authors cannot go', and then added that, 'a perpetual slavery which can only be broken by revolution'. Other extremists too rapidly took the ideas from her, and their criticism of the 'Reforms' were in many cases intemperate. A Bengallee known by the name, Chitharanjan Das, was for the complete rejection of the Reforms. [11]

If that was the opinion on the 'Reforms' which the country got so easily by the goodwill of the British Government just on account of the sweeping agitation all over the country by Mrs. Besant and other Home Rule Leaguers, Gandhi had another local or regional stunt to play at Kaira district of Gujarat. That was another peasant movement, but a little different from that of the Champaran episode. Here the significance was on the issue of assessment which and whatever the Government decided was final and irrevocable and the only remedy available to the peasant was the ineffective remedy of representation and petition. But this had never succeeded, and the assessment would always stand as it was, and the peasant had to pay the rent or quit the land.

So Gandhi thought that there was an opportunity for him to do another 'Champaran', but then he was keeping aloof from the All India movements in order to assert his own way and his own personality. This kind of peasant dissatisfaction was and is a recurring feature anywhere and it would be there always. But the national leaders should have given priority for the freedom movement of the entire country, and that was what Mrs. Besant had been doing. Once the country was free then the people had their freedom and there would be no more autocracy, according to the bombastic slogans and shoutings of the

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11. Percival Griffiths- The British Impact on India.

of the leaders of the day. But the Hindu leaders started doing things from wrong ends. Tilak was vomitting his anti-Muslim feelings, and Gandhi was trying to befriend some Muslims when the rest of the Muslims suspected his methods and the Hindu liberals kept away from him. Thus the mistakes that were committed then were persistently kept up and that at last ended in disastrous consequences. However, one Gandhian biographer wrote that: 'Kaira was spectacular, symbolic- the first direct expression of the masses'. I2.

These sorts of exhortations do not take one anywhere. Much has been said in that way about our leaders. 'The first direct expression of the masses' was heard in the days of 'Sepoy Mutiny' though it was not a freedom struggle. Later after thirty years, with the founding of the National Congress, the 'direct expression' of the masses began to take shape and that showed in its zenith in 1917 with the Home Rule movement in an all India scale. Compared to that Gandhi's Champaran and Kaira demonstration of 1917 and 1918 respectively, were just the regional agitations although those things might have been helpful to intensify the Reform movement. In Kaira too, Gandhi's was a passive resistance movement, and he had his newly acquired recruit Sardar Vallabhbai Patel with him to make the movement a success. As a result of that the peasants became resolute in their demand. They did not dread the confiscation of their land. They were not afraid of being sent to prison. Moreover, the authorities also recognised the claims of the peasants and suspended the tax on the poorer of the peasantry. Thus the Kaira, or what was also called the Khedda SATYAGRAHA movement, became a success, and Gandhi was sure that his methods appealed to the Indian mind. Gandhi himself wrote about the success of this movement that: I3.

> "Dr. Besant's brilliant Home Rule agitation had certainly touched the peasants but it was the Kheda campaign that compelled the educated public workers to establish contact with the actual life of the peasants. They learnt to identify themselves with the latter---------Through the Kheda campaign SATYAGRAHA took firm root in the soil of Gujarat--------That Vallabhbai found himself during this campaign was by itself no small achievement--------."

Those were just the agitations within a restricted area or district. Here Gandhi's discovery of Sardar Patel, a lawyer, was a triumph for him. Patel was one of the able and strong leaders of the later times, and also a successful administrator. However, by this time in 1918, Gandhi was advocating to suspend the Home Rule movement because he had always been in sympathy for the British war efforts and so also most of the Indians. But Mrs. Besant held a different view when she said at the Calcutta Congress sessions before 4,967 delegates and over 5,000 visitors, that:

> "India today stands erect, no suppliant people; her hand is stretched out to Britain in friendship, not in subservience; in cooperation, not in obedience--------."

In the beginning of the year 1918, Gandhi was set on another of his passive resistance programme. Mrs. Besant had inclined to approve his method of SATYAGRAHA when she saw that he and his wife had taken a vow to fast until the locked out underpaid cotton mill operatives in Ahmedabad were given an increase of at least 35 per cent in their pay. She wrote

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I2. D. F. Karaka- 'Out of Dust'.
I3. Gandhi- My Experiments with Truth'- Page 366.

admiringly that it was 'the highest form of ancient Brahman passive resistance', and so on. She also agreed with Gandhi when the latter extended his methods to the peasants of Kaira and when he personally directed their stike against the tax collectors. The law entitled the farmers to exemption of payment of land taxes when the yield was less than 25 per cent of the normal. But the Government was adament, and there was a state of revolt in Kaira with Vallabhbai Patel interceding for the farmers. It was then Gandhi took that issue up into his hands soon after his ~~return~~ return from Champaran. That was a four-month long agitation, and Gandhi campaigned against taxes. He walked, travelled in bullock carts and even slept in open fields.

In the case of the grievances of the workers of the textile mills of Ahmedabad demanding 50 per cent increase in their wages, Gandhi tried hard to bring the differences to a reasonable compromise. He had open air meetings on the banks of the Sabaramati, with mill-owners, workers, strikers and others. 'To the students of industrial relations', said Dr. S. Gopal, 'there is a touch of unreality about this strike and Gandhi's role in it.' The leader of the mill-owners, Ambalal Sarabhai was a personal friend of Gandhi's; he was also probably the anonymous donor who gave Gandhi considerable financial assistance on his repatriation in 1915. The leaders of the workers, who sought Gandhi's intervention, was Sarabhai's sister. Throughout the three-weeks ~~of~~ agitation, Sarabhai, his sister and Gandhi met every day and often had lunch together. When the workers demanded raise in wages, the employers staged a lock out; later, when the workers went on strike, the mill-owners ended the the lockout and sought to break the strike. Gandhi, in the meantime, by daily talks and leaflets, exhorted the workers to stand firm and ~~st~~ stressed the need for truth and courage. He helped them to formulate and put forward minimum demands so that there was no room for retreat; this to him was always an important essence of SATYAGRAHA. Finally when the workers began to grow despondent and critical of their leaders, he undertood a public fast as a sign of solidarity with them. The employers thereupon agreed to the demands of the workers. Gandhi, however, was reduced almost to shame at the realization that, because of his special relationship with the employer group, his fast had served as a blackmail of them. I4.

The whole think looked like a stage-managed affair for Gandhi to exhibit and declare his faith on the much advertised SATYAGRAHA or the passive resistance movement. When this agitation was on, Mrs. Besant arrived in Ahmedabad to give two lectures- one on National Education and the other on SWARAJ. In the afternoon Gandhi chaired the meeting and introduced her in glowing terms: He said that:

"No matter if she commits one hundred mistakes, we shall honour her".

He did not mention anything about the strike at the cotton mills. Pointing to Ambalal Gandhi said, 'these people have decided to destroy mill-workers'. Ambalal told them that 'they want to do the same to mill-owners'. Mrs. Besant then offered her willingness to intervene, but Gandhi said that it was 'quite unnecessary'. Mrs. Besant found

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I4. A review on Erik Erikson s book- 'Gandhi's Truth' by Dr. S.Gopal, April 1970.

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this attitude of Gandhi as 'rather unusual'.

In spite of several such 'rather unusual' attitudes of Gandhi, there was no dearth for the expression of mutual regards between Mrs. Besant and Gandhi. Why did Gandhi reject Mrs. Besant's offer? Did he want th take this issue to an extent of fasting and thus avail of an opportunity to see as to what would be the reaction of the country? Indeed, why? How after all the dispute arose when his friend Ambalal was the mill-owner, and this same mill-owner's daughter fighting against the mill-owners, and Gandhi being patronised by them? All this looks ~~th~~ like a great TAMAASHA. Dr. S. Gopal said in continuation, that:

> "In keeping with the unreality of the episode, Gandhi was able to express at every stage his satisfaction that the lock-out and the strike were being conducted with mutual regard and cordial relations; 'That action alone is just which does not harm either party to a dispute'. This, of course, is easier done in political and social reform movements than in the settlement of economic problems. Gandhi's abhorrence of class warfare; his pledge that he would promote the interest of the workers only 'while safeguarding the employers', his condemnation of the Western or the modern Satanic notion of justice that could benefit one party only at the expense of the other- all this idealization could rapidly be reduced to more nationalization in favour of the employers."

That was the idea that Gandhi gave to socialogists about his SATYAGRAHA. When he fasted, it was said that his innocent as well as the ignorant wife too fasted. After all Kastúribai did not know anything of politics, economics, strikes, mills, etc. She too was dragged to fasting. Gandhi might have said, as he had once said in South Africa, that Kasturibai went to jail of her own accord. Anyway by the time those mill-workers' strike took place, Kasturibai did not learn anything now and yet she too was induced to fast. All this seemed to have been just the needless showmanship of Gandhi and also to tell the country that he was doing more than Mrs. Besant or anyone else for the country. A minute study of Gandhi's actions and inclinations and intentions reveal that he was merely trying to pose as though he was doing something marvellous with all such antics of his and in the full glare of the publicity media of the time.

However, Gandhi's fast seemed to have had the desired effect. What was that? The news that he was fasting spread all over India, and the people came to know of the rise of a new god in India. Champaran, Kaira and now Ahmedabad- these episodes got him name as a practical politician, and his fasting taking full advantage of the British leniency and liberalism which they extraordinarily displayed while dealing with the country's politicians all those years till 1947, when they finally left.

When Gandhi fasted, it was said, the whole country was agitated, and those included some politicians as well. It appears that Mrs. Besant wired from Madras to the mill-owners, that: 'Don't sacrifice a great man to a small cause'.

All this sounded well at that time. That was the first fast of Gandhi in India and, therefore, for the people it was a new spectacle altogether. It was reported that when Gandhi broke his fast before a hushed crowd, people as well as mill-owners were satis-

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satisfied. But Gandhi had his own doubt about his fast and, therefore, he seemed to have said that: 'Perhaps, I owe an explanation to the public with regard to my recent fast'. He also added that: I5.

> "I felt that it was a sacred moment for me; my faith was on the anvil, and I had no hesitation to rising and declaring to the men that a breach of their vow so solemnly taken was unendurable by me and that I would not take any food until they had 35 per cent increase given or until they had fallen. A meeting that was up to now unlike the former meetings, totally unresponsive, woke up as if it was a magic."

Thus Gandhi kept himself busy with his 'pilot experiments'. His role in Ahemdabad textile workers' strike 'was only one step in a general plan to awaken the wide political consciousness, one of the many preludes to the national campaign', that he launched in 1919 for the first time. But in this campaign of 1918, Gandhi took an extreme measure of fasting which he did occasionally before and after that. His philosophy of fasting varied from time to time and as to the circumstances. He fasted on spiritual grounds that it gave him clarity of vision and peace of mind in times of great crisis and turmoil. Sometimes he fasted on moral grounds that it enabled him both to indicate his profound displeasure with the refractory conduct of people who were near him; and the fast in Ahmedabad was due to the reason that the strikers at the textile mill went back on their pledge. Gandhi also went on fast for political or other reasons. Some of his associates found a sort of force applied by these fasts against the opponents. Some found the fasts as a threat, and some found that as stunts to compel the authority to act.

Annie Besant had some views on these Gandhian technics or antics. She found, as already said, that Gandhi with his spiritual instincts, was not fit for politics which is just a game of ordinary men. The place of prophets was elsewhere, she thought. Whether Gandhi was really a man with spiritual instinct and also a prophet, was a different matter. Anyway Annie did not approve of Gandhi's passive resistance programme, and she held to that idea consistently till her last days. She saw that Gandhi's influence won only after a more prolonged suffering. But suffering before whom? The British? Had it been any other ruling power like the Portuguese, Muslim, French or any others, would they tolerate 'suffering Gandhi'? They would have considered him as a nuisance, and, perhaps, Gandhi himself knew that better than the onlookers of his antics from his experience with the British both in South Africa and India.

However, Mrs. Besant came to the conclusion after a couple of years that 'SATYAGRAHA should only be an instrument used by a single individual as a protest against a wrong or injustice that he cannot approve; it can never be properly used collectively or 'en masse' to coerce a Government for political purposes. It should aim at changing the hearts of the people and not their institutions." I6.

Amidst these civil disobedience movements in the remote districts, Gandhi was also busy in his campaign for the support to war efforts of the British. On the one

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I5. This'document' was got written with Gandhi's approval in 'Bombay Chronicle'.
I6. Prof. Nethercot- on Annie Besant- Page 275.

hand he took up for campaigning SWADESHI with 'burning passion', and strongly recommended Hindi as a 'national language' through his numerous public speeches, and on the other hand, he canvassed among people 'to enlist ourselves in the army'. Writing to Mrs. Besant on the 4th July 1918, Gandhi said, that: I7.

> "I search NEW INDIA in vain for an emphatic declaration from you in favour of unconditional recruiting. Surely it must be plain that if every Home Rule leaguer became an active recruiting depot we would ensure the passing of the Congress- League scheme with only such modifications as we may agree to--------I would like to see you with your old fire glowing stronger in the face of the opposition. If we supplied recruits we should dictate terms. But if we wait for terms the war may close, India may remain without a real military training and we should be face to face with a military dictatorship."

Mrs. Besant, naturally did not agree with Gandhi's views on recruiting men for the Army in order to help the British war effort. She was beginning to feel that her methods and that of Gandhi's were incompatible but all the same she tried to praise Gandhi's method of 'self-suffering' to achieve objectives, although that was in itself a senseless way of solving the political issues.

Gandhi, however, by the publicity he got for his 'pilot experiments' of the civil disobedience movement, he proceeded to work out his strange ideas. But his friend, an outstanding as well as the last of the English nationalists in India, also called DHEENA-BHANDHU, for his magnificent services to the country, Charles Andrews, raised a question about Gandhi's morality in participating in the war conference despite his knowing about the opposition to his queer ideas. However, Gandhi later said, that:

> "Dheenabandhu Andrews raised a question about the morality of my participation in the war conference--------Later I addressed a letter to the Viceroy Lord Chelmsford explaining my hesitation to take part in the conference."

Gandhi reported on what he did at the war conference. Even there one could see Gandhi dabbling with his idea of giving importance to Indian languages more than his desire to help the British war effort. In that way Gandhi was a crank and a glorified Mahatma among the people who did not know what actually he was! Gandhi said:

> "I attended the war conference (concerning to recruiting campaign). The Viceroy was keen on my supporting the resolution about recruiting (men for the Army). I asked permission to speak in Hindi or Hindustani. The Viceroy acceded to my request but suggested that I should also speak in English------Many congratulated me on my having spoken in Hindustani. That was, they said, the first instance within living memory of anyone having spoken in Hindustani at such a meeting."

When objections of Gandhi's participation in such conferences came from many of the nationalists, he later wrote to the Viceroy that: I8.

> "I felt constrained to convey to your Excellency that I could not attend the Conference for reasons stated in the letter of the 26th inst.----------One of my reasons for abstention and perhaps the strongest was that LOKAMANYA Tilak, Mrs. Besant and Ali Brothers whom I regard as among the most powerful leaders of public opinion, were not invited to the conference. I still feel that it was a blunder not to have asked them (to participate in the conference)."

I7. Prof. Nethercot on Annie- Pages 230 & 276.
I8. Gandhi- 'My Experiments with Truth'- Page 372.

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That was the time when the Montague- Chelmsford Reforms had been much talked about. Politicians were busy discussing about the Report wheich came out in July 1918, and that had promised a greater participation of Indians in the affairs of the Government. In that way it did give India a very limited measure of self-Government. According to the announcement of the Secretary of State, Sir Edwin Montague in 1917, the report was the outcome of 'the policy of his Majesty's Government---------(and) it's about the increasing association of Indians in every branch of administration and the gradual development of self-Governing institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible Government in India as an integral part of the British empire.'

This report was the direct result, as already said, of the Home Rule agitation of 1917 that stromed the entire country with Mrs. Besant at the centre of the storm. She deserved the credit for rousing the masses and also for being the cause for the emergence of the 1919 Reforms. No Indian seemed to have openly agreed with this view although every writer and every politician has sneakily admitted the great and outstanding role played by her when the rest of India or the Indian politicians were in disarray with differing opinions or with no opinions at all. That was how the things looked like in those days.

However, as to the Montague- Chelmsford report, the comments of Mrs. Besant was that 'the political reforms indicated in the report were unworthy of England to give and India to take'. Bal Gangadhar Tilak considered that as 'a good report with a useless scheme'. Chittaranjan Das anticipated the failure of diarchy as stipulated in the scheme with the increased cooperation between the British and Indian as equal partners in the administration. He wanted a real responsible Government in five years. Tilak and C.R.Das both said that the Reforms were 'inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing', whereas Madan Mohan Malaviya and Gandhi wanted to work out the Reforms Scheme on the basis of offering cooperation to the extent to which the Government cooperated with the people. Srinivasa Sastri struck a reasonable note after publishing 'the Congress-League Scheme- in which he declared his preference for 'responsive government as better suited to India than the responsible Government'.

During this time, Mrs. Besant was the President of the Congress. The Home Rule agitation led by her, her internment, the scheme of passive resistance that was thought of jointly by the Congress as well as Muslim League, the great speech of Edwin Montague, and Mrs. Besant's release and her election as President of the Congress, formed the background for the Calcutta Congress sessions of 1917. As to her presidential address, it was said that: [19]

> "It was an elaborate thesis of India's self-Government. Her summary of the military and mercantile problems was comprehensive- and constituted a splendid course of reference to students---------With Mrs. Besant, the presidentship of the Congress was not a passing show or a three-day festivity. It was a day-to-day responsibility and in that view Mrs. Besant was the first to claim presidentship of the Congress throughout the ~~successive~~ succeeding year."

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19. Pattabhi Sitaramayya- History of Congress, pages 28 & 146.

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Tilak went to Madras in March 1918 to confer with Mrs. Besant on the announced Montague-Chelmsford Report, and on his campaign as leader of deputation to England. Arundale hailed him in a full-page report in his paper that along with Gandhi and Aurobindo Ghose as 'one of trios of martyr-heroes'. 'Thus there was a rich opportunity' said Prof. Nethercot, 'for competitive martyrdom in India at that time'.

It so appeared that these leaders never agreed among themselves, and there was no definite policy as such to ~~form~~ face the Government and then fight unitedly. The Congress sessions were held on an annual and bi-annual basis, and yet the leaders were found differing from each other. Tilak wrote to Gandhi to attend the Congress session, and on the 25th August 1918, Gandhi wrote in reply that: 20.

> "I do not intend to attend the Moderates' conference. I know that my views differ from those of both (Mrs. Besant and yourself)---------I feel that we can render a great service to India by devoting ourselves to the work of the recruitment and taking lakhs of people with us. Mrs. Besant and you do not agree with my view---------And even if Mrs. Besant and you accept my idea, you will not fight in the manner I want to fight. Mrs. Besant had said that she is not a SATYAGRAHI. You have accepted SATYAGRAHA as a weapon of the weak. I do not want to be under illusion. So I do not want to create agitation in the Congress, parting company with you two. And I have this faith that if my penance is perfect, you and Mrs. Besant will accept my principle. I can have patience."

Thus people were trying to infuse some spiritual content to the political movement. This idea was first mooted by Raanade and then worked out by Gokhale and later it was experimented by Gandhi. Mrs. Besant, who had ~~fought~~ fought many a bettle both in England and India and on the same lines with Charles Bradlaugh in England about thirty years prior to that, had come to the stage of not agreeing with the idea of spiritualising politics simply because it was not possible. However much one may try to be spiritual in politics there would be in the end a lot of bitterness and unsavoury relationship among people. Although Mrs. Besant was a lady of religion and every inch a lady, she drew a wide line between politics and religion and she had no illusion about that. She was out and out practical, and she never liked the way the people were going about talking both religion and politics in the same breath. She wrote much about that as well.

However, in opposing the Montague-Chelmsford award, most of the Home Rule Leaguers and Congress-men were united, and there was a clamour for further reforms and full SWARAJ. By that time the people of India were thoroughly roused as a result of which an intense agitation took place in the country during the years 1918 and 1919. That showed the British liberalism and statesmanship in alerting the Indians to their political realities by awarding them the Reform Act of 1909 and now again the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms. In this the role of Annie Besant as President of National Congress in 1917-18, when the rest of the Indian leaders were just dabbling in regional agitations and kept themselves in sidelines, was certainly significant.

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20. Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi- Vol. 13 & 14.

1917

CHAPTER X.

THE ROWLETT ACT & 'JALIANWALLABAGH'.

The Home Rule agitation launched by Mrs. Besant, the confusion that prevailed after her internment and the violence that followed, in 1917, was the first of its kind in the country since 1857, exactly after sixty years. No one had then dreamt that just after thirty years in 1947, India would become free, but not in the way Annie Besant and several others of those times had visualised.

The Montague- Chelmsford Reforms recommended that India should enjoy a far greater control than it had been so far. In this the Secretary of State, Edwin Montague, had staked his political career. He chalked out a scheme to show that a system under the much publicised scheme known as diarchy was introduced whereby some functions of Government should be taken over by the Indians while others should be retained by the British. These proposals to grant an instalment of self-Government, provided for elected majorities in the central and provincial legislatures, but retained the official blocks nominated by the Government. The Viceroy was authorised to exercise the over-riding powers of veto in respect of any legislation. In the provinces the system of diarchy was introduced by which certain subjects were reserved under the control of the Governor, and other subjects such as Education, Health and local Self-Government were entrusted to the ministers selected from the majority parties in the legislatures. The public reception for these proposals was a mixed one. Some leaders pressed that the scheme should be given a fair trial. It was said that: 1

> "This was an Act of faith that the illiterate masses forming nearly ninety percent of the total population would gradually learn to wisely exercise the privilege of vote--------Hopes ran high in political circles that through the channels of diarchy the bark of India's constitution would be guided to the haven of Dominion Status."

But then in respect of law and order, the Government did not want things to go too far. They appointed an English judge, Sir Sydney Rowlett in 1917 to inquire into the nature and extent of subversive activities in the country that was perpetrated in the name of Home Rule agitation. It was also said, that: 2.

> "By a curious quirk of destiny, these Reform proposals, called the Montague- Chelmsford Reforms, coincided with the publication in April 1918, the report of Sydney Rowlett. The terms of reference to this Committee had been to consider what measures were necessary in view of the fact that the validity of the Defence of India Act would expire six months after the termination of the war. Unless some provision was made, it would be obligatory on the Government to release all the internees detained without proper trial. It considered that in view of the revolutionary activities in the country, the Government should have sufficient powers to maintain law and order. The report made a strong case for retention of the emergency exercised by the Government during the war time. The provincial governments be given powers of internment

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1. K.L.Punjabi- Biography of Rajemdra Prasad, Page 44.
2. R.P.Masani- quoted by Arthur Swinson (1964).

dispensed with in case of trials for political
the text of these Rowlett Bills implementing these recommendations." Government accepted this report in February 1918, and later published

Thus both these Bills- the Rowlett Bill and the Montague Reforms were before the people during the first six months of the year 1918. The publication of these Bills aroused consternation and alarm in the country as they constituted a serious threat to the freedom of the people. To the people, they were 'Black Bills'.

Now someone must speak out apart from the politicians of the time. After all there was nothing to call the Montague Award a Black Bill. It was certainly a step forward for self-Government. There was nothing derogatory in that. As to Justice Sydney Rowlett's Bill that came out on the 30th April 1918, what aroused the storm of indignant protest? It was said that it recommended a permanent measure, the trials of political cases without juries and indefinite internment without trial. About this report and its aftermath, the twin-authors, Ed. Thompson and G.T.Garett said, that: 3.

"The events which occurred during these twenty months left an imprint on Indo-British relations comparable with the after-effects of the Mutiny of 1857. The nationalist movement aided by Mrs. Besant's skilful propaganda, had become troublesome to the Government which depended on the Press Act and the Defence of India Act to curb the opposition---------."

So the Bill enraged some politicians, and in turn the people who were out to create hooliganism. This made the Government all the more determined to proceed with the Rowlett Bill. Later the whole thing became a vicious circle. When the Government proceeded with the enactment of the Bill, the Indian public felt antagonised, and as a result they took to HARTAL, SATYAGRAHA, passive resistance and all such kinds of Gandhian technics, of course, as prompted by Gandhi himself. With this the country obviously turned violent, and the Government had to put down the disturbance.

Now one has to know the WHO IS WHO of the Indian politics in 1918 and 1919, because with the publication of the Montague Award and Rowlett Bill, the country's elder leadership was in the wane and people saw new stars rising but most of those stars which were twinkling in sidelines or 'sitting on the fence', were merely the satellites around a couple of national leaders who had let loose their civil disobedience programme in an already agitated country. With this the people saw that Mohandas Gandhi was firm on the saddle by the year 1919 although there were Mrs. Besant (73), Lokamanya Tilak (64) and a few others while Gandhi was only fifty years old in 1919.

A conference against the Rowlett Act was held at Gandhi's SATYAGRAHA ASHRAM. A Satyagaraha Sabha was formed of which Gandhi was the President. Among those who attended the meeting included Vallabhbai Patel, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, Hornimann, Umar Sobani, Shankarlal Banker and Smt. Anasuya Behn. The Satyagraha pledge was drafted at this meeting, and Gandhi ventilated his voice through the daily press as he had no paper of his own at that time.

It was during these days, Gandhi was able to get some more men to stand by him, and

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3. Kodanda Rao- a biography of Srinivasa Sastri.

some among them were defectors from Annie Besant's group and one prominent defector was Motilal Nehru who was a protege of Annie for over fifteen years. It is from this point one has to carefull watch this Nehru tribe that was foisted on the country by Gandhi. When Motilal Nehru defected to Gandhi's side, he was already a disgruntled man because the Congress presidentship for the year 1918 went to one of his local rivals. Motilal Nehru thought that it was better now to jump over the other side to Gandhi's camp for some opportunities, and indeed, Gandhi did bestow upon him the presidentship of the Congress in the year 1919.

That was the way the Gandhian politics began along with the anti-British shoutings in the streets mostly by street urchins and paid cronies. That was certainly a good opportunity for several men who were in their forties to join Gandhi's group and then get called themselves as nationalists. Those neo-Congressmen included Vallbahbai Patel, C.Rajagopalachari, Maulana Azad, and others. Till then they were all local lawyers, journalists or social workers. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, Rajendra Prasad, Chittaranjan Das and some such people too belong to this group of fence-sitters during the first forty or fifty years of their lives. Till then they were all wondering and watching the political movements launched by those elder stalwarts of the time, especially by Annie Besant who revolutionised Indian politics during 1913 and 1918.

When Gandhi took over to his own brand of non-cooperation politics from out of the chaos created by the agitation against the Rowlett Bill and Jalianwallabagh episode, he found all these people handy to be his lieutenants because all of them now felt that they were on the side of the younger as well as the 'winning horse'. Bal Gangadhar Tilak died and Annie Besant slowly withdrew and so also Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Ramaswami Iyer, Srinivasa Sastri and several others, including the poet Rabindranath Tagore- all of whom did not believe Gandhi s non-violent non-cooperation programme which always resulted in violence and disorder.

However, in his enthusiasm to make his leadership effective, Gandhi roped in to his camp some Muslims. Here it must be said that from the very beginning, Gandhi had some attachment to Muslims. It could be said that his early life was mostly influenced by his association with Muslims. In his early youth in South Africa, he had Dada Abdullah, his patron, Dawad Muhammad, President of the Natal Indian Congress, Ismail Cora, Omar Hajee, Abdul Rahman and other prominent Muslims. There were also Abdul Ghani, Hajee Ojar, Hajee Habib and others of Hamidiya Islamic Society of South Africa, Maulana Mazharul Huq, his friend in England whom he later met in Champaran, Bihar and, of course, those Ali brothers, Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali.

That sophisticated Muslim barrister, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, too, was an associate of Gandhi during 1915 and 1920, and that Arabic scholar and writer Maulana Azad was also there. Khan Abdul Ghafur Khan, the Pathan leader and his brother known as Khan Saheb, Asaf Ali, Dr. Zakir Hussein, Rafi Ahmad Kidwai and few other younger men too joined the group of the neo-nationalists. Among these, those Ali brothers had deserted Gandhi in

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the mid-ninetween-twenties, and so also Muhammad Ali Jinnah a little later. The rest of the Hindu and Muslim politicians stuck to Gandhi so that they could take political advantage of him, and that was how it seemed in those days, and also many years later.

After the Muslim League was founded in I906 and after the Minto-Morley Reforms of I909, the Muslims secured separate electoral representation. At the same time, the relationship between Hindus and Muslims had a marked change. The Lucknow Pact of December I9I6, got up by the efforts of Annie Besant and other nationalists, served to create harmony between Hindus and Muslims. However, there were some developments that caused to break up of the fact despite some ardent ~~Muslim~~ patriots like the Raja of Mahmudabad who said in his presidential address at the session of the Indian Muslim League at Calcutta, that:

> "The interests of the country are paramount. We need not tarry to argue whether we are Muslims first or Indians. The fact is that we are both, and to us the question of precedence has no meaning."

Maulana Azad was Gandhi's trusted lieutenant, but he too was different. His name was Abul Kalam, and as a young man of 24, in I9I2, he started a Urdu ~~xxx~~ newspaper AL HILAL, and selected AZAD as his pen-name. His powerful pen and scholarship revolutionised the Muslim opinion and brought the community nearer to the Congress. His AL HILAL had a circulation of 26,000 in those days. Abul Kalam had believed that:

> "The fundamental principles of Islam require international solidarity of all Muslims, and that all Muslims must remain united in an organic whole--------~~Xxxxxxx~~ The next most important tenet should be the acknowledgement of the Caliph as the instrument through which Islamic solidarity is maintained. Obedience to the Caliph should be mandatory--------."

So Gandhi should have known the mould and calibre of all his numerous Muslim friends like Azad, Hafiz, Ali, and others who were all a bunch of opportunists. They wanted to live in India with their hearts elsewhere. Here it should be referred to another outstanding Muslim in India who contributed much to influence the Islamic solidarity. After Sir Syed Khan, the most powerful scholarly Muslim was the poet Muhammad Iqbal, born in I873, in Sialkot, Punjab. He was educated in Cambridge and Germany and later worked at the Government College in Lahore as a professor. Iqbal was an outspoken critic of the Government's educational policy. He was knighted in I922.

As to Muhammad Ali Jinnah, till I9I8, he was a prominent Congress nationalist and 'a solid pillar among the moderates whose aim was Dominion Status for India within the British empire'. In those days, none of the Muslims, including Ali brothers and Muhammad Iqbal, had taken any extreme steps to fan communalism among the Indian Muslims although there were good many fanatics among them. When Gandhi took Muslim politicians to his side his only aim was to fight the Rowlett Bill. He did not then visualise that his Muslim friends were all extremists in their love to the Caliphate of the distant Turkey, even though the fanatics among them like the Ali Brothers were openly advocating justice to the cause of the Caliph. Everyone then took all these as sheer religious ritual and not politics that would end in disastrous consequences.

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With so many Muslim friends by his side and all along his career from South Africa to India, Gandhi should have known that the Muslims were all truly Islamic and they need not be Indian in their heart of hearts. He thought that his homilies would touch them and they would change their ways. But all those assumptions of Gandhi and other Hindus were too soon belied and later the Hindu politicians were put in a position from which they could not escape. Gandhi would say about his relationship with Muslims, that: 4.

> "My South African experiences had convinced me that it would be on the question of Hindu-Muslim unity that my AHIMSA would be put to its severest test, and that the question presented the widest field for my experiments in AHIMSA--------."

But the wiser and cleverer persons than Gandhi saw that his playing politics with the word AHIMSA was itself a humbug. Gandhi's politics of AHIMSA went ahead as and when the street mobs, rather ignorantly, mobbed and shouted ZINDABAD to him and to his leading supporters. At that time people did not know that Gandhi had already split the 35-year old Indian National Congress to make himself and his men a part of it while all the senior as well as sincere nationalists kept away from him. As to Gandhi's Muslim recruits, one solitary figure, who was with him all along till 1947, was Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Later till 1958, he served as one of the ministers at the central cabinet. Khan Abdul Ghaffur Khan and Dr. Zakir Hussein were also there, but people thought that Abul Kalam Azad was a moderate Muslim. But was he that? Here is what Azad had been saying all along but never expressed himself as eloquently as this at any time. He said, that: 5.

> "Ottoman Caliph could do no wrong; the European powers were bent on destroying him-------It was obligatory upon Muslims to wage a JEHAD in defence of the Caliph."

Yes, to wage a JEHAD in defence of the Caliph, the Indian Muslims used Gandhi who in turn was in need of people to support his wing of National Congress that he had just split. Gandhi had no time to look to the consequences of what he was doing. He simply became a leader of Muslims when the Hindu nationalists like Gokhale, Tilak, Srinivasa Sastri, and poet Tagore found Gandhi's method divisive as well as destructive. However, Gandhi wrote many years later, that: 6.

> "It was after the imprisonment of the Ali brothers that I was invited by the Muslim friends to attend the session of the Muslim League at Calcutta. Being requested to speak, I addressed them on the duty of the Muslims to secure the release of Ali brothers. ---------In that connection, I studied the Brothers' views and activities about the Khilafat. I had discussions with the Muslim friends. I felt that, if I would become a true friend of the Muslims, I must render all possible help in securing the release of the brothers, and a just settlement of the Khilafat question.
>
> "As the time progressed I found that the Muslim demand about the Khilafat was not only not against any ethical principle, but that the British prime minister had admitted the justice of the Muslim demand. I felt, therefore, bound to render what help I could in securing a due fulfilment of the prime minister's pledge------.
>
> "Friends and critics have criticised my attitude regarding the Khilafat question.

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4. Mohandas Gandhi- My Experiments with Truth.
5. Arthur Swinson- 'Six Minutes to Sunset'- Page 92.
6. Mohandas Gandhi- My Experiments with Truth.

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In spite of the criticism I feel that I have no reason to revise it or to regret my cooperation with the Muslims. I should adopt the same attitude should a similar occasion arise."

In this statement of Gandhi there are many questionable points. Firstly, the Muslims invited him for their meeting in Calcutta. He showed his sympathy to the idea of releasing the Ali Brothers, and he began to study their views on Khilaffat. Gandhi also said that he intended 'to become a true friend of Muslims' and thus try for 'a just settlement of the Khilaffat question.'

This was the beginning of a series of political as well as national blunders committed by Gandhi and to which blunders he stuck on as a stubborn old woman saying that he 'would adopt the same attitude should a similar occasion arise'. Gandhi could crave for the Muslim support as a politician, but what business had an Indian to take up the cause of the people of four-thousand miles away? It would have been better for Gandhi to go to Turkey and fight for the people there as he did in South Africa. But with himself in India, he fought for some extraneous cause, and all that was to secure the goodwill of the Indian Muslims, and that is to say the least, a politics of opportunism. All those Muslims who had surrounded Gandhi exploited him, and Gandhi in return, to stabilise his leadership in the country took the cause of anti-Rowlett Bill as though it was a tyrannical measure. He called it a Black Bill and that was what he called the South African Bill of Jan Smuts against which he fought.

In India, Gandhi had only two potential rivals- Mrs. Besant and Tilak and he could have waited to gain an upperhand over them for some time because both of them were old. But Gandhi would not wait. No wonder, both Mrs. Besant and Tilak completely kept aloof from Gandhi's activities. Mrs. Besant, no doubt, was more an Indian, and Tilak more a Hindu, than Gandhi ever was!

On this issue of Khilaffat alone, Gandhi lost a good many of his adherents, and he had to recruit people anew to go on with his politics. But to gain the mass appeal, he began minimising his clothing requirements gradually but had not come to the loincloth stage.

Secondly, Gandhi said that 'Khilaffat issue was not against ethical principle'. That kind of excuse is given even today by all politicians for whatever they do. Here Gandhi was nothing more than a politician although people were made to think about him as someone extraordinary. That was where the country was deceived even as early as that. Here the question was why should Gandhi have bothered about a problem elsewhere! How did it to concern to India, Indeed, how?

A close look into Gandhi's mind and an objective study of his motives provide us an entirely different picture of the man. As already said, he was stubborn in his general attitude and he would cling to his ideas explaining his attitude in as many words as he could. He publicied his truth, non-violence, BRAHMACHARYA and such things only to draw the attention of the people towards him and his politics and how far he was perfect in all that no one had tried to asses in those days.

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Gandhi had always been individualistic and he never wanted to follow anyone. When asked why he was 'ploughing his lonely furrow' during the Home Rule agitation, he replied that 'At my time of life and with views firmly formed on several matters, I could only join an organization to affect its policy and not be affected by it. He also added, that:

> 'That does not mean that I would not have an open mind to receive new light. I simply wish to emphasise the fact that the new light will have to be specially dazzling in order to entrance me.' 7.

So Gandhi does not say that his was a closed mind or one-track mind. He admitted that he had an open mind but the 'new light' for him should be 'specially dazzling in order to entrance him'. Either way, this is a politician's way of looking at things. For every thing Gandhi had dual explanation, and his TRUTH, SATYAGRAHA, etc in politics was a coercive way to get things done as he wanted. Bal Gangadhar Tilak had told him that: 'Politics is a game of worldly people and not of SADHUs'. He criticised Gandhi for his unconditional support to the British war effort.

Anyway it was difficult to say that Gandhi was a SADHU. He was a reactionary. He wanted to do things in his own way and, therefore, he would adopt some negative views and go on with it like a crank. He would say that he had a kind of intution or inner voice that prompted him things. Of course, every human being has such intuition, or a capacity to think reasonably. In order to support his own programmes, either right or wrong, Gandhi would say about his inner voice. His recruiting soldiers in support of the British in 1918, and with such crazy ideas he tried to make his presence felt as a national leader. In Champaran and Kaira, Gandhi fought against the system that prevailed but when the peasants were asked to take arms to become British soldiers, they told him, that

> "We made you great; we helped you make SATYAGRAHA work, and see, what you ask of us now."

All this could be called paradoxes of Gandhi who demanded from both Mrs. Besant and Muhammad Ali Jinnah 'an emphatic declaration--------in favour of unconditional recruiting' of men for the British Army, but, however, both of them did not agree with Gandhi on his strange technics.

Gandhi's friends found a lot of ambiguities in his ways, methods and fasts, but he would remain adament and say that: 8.

> "Whatever may be the verdict of friends, so far as I can think at present, on given occasions, I should not hesitate in future to repeat the humble performance."

Gandhi's was certainly one-track mind, and stubborn as well. Referring to the agitation of the textile mill workers, that he led, he said: 'I have not known a struggle fought with so little bitterness and such courtesy on either side.'

Thus Gandhi held on to his own views consistently, either right or wrong. To make his views look ethical he took to simplicity and sainly garbs and that was enough for the boorish people of the country to see a Mahatma in him. It was said that: 9.

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7. G.A.Natesan- quoted by B.R.Nanda- 'Reminiscences' in Gandhi.
8. Eric Erikson- Gandhi's Truth- Page 362,
9. Percival Griffiths- The British Impact on India.

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"With consummate political skill, he took the (Khilaffat) movement under his wing, and so combined that with the Congress non-cooperation campaign. It seems incredible that the war-like Muslim leaders could have worked in harness either with the apostle of peace or with the militant Hindu leaders, but Muhammad Ali frankly regarded it as a marriage of convenience."

Among the other associates of Gandhi, Motilal Nehru, came next. This older Nehru was a Theosophist as a result of Annie Besant' influence over him. Later he became an active Home Leaguer in Allahabad. He was a follower of Mrs. Besant for several years but when Gandhi was making his way up, Motilal Nehru defected to his side. The yet untold reason for his defection was that Annie Besant did not recommend him for the Presidentship of Congress in 1918. Therefore, he walked to Gandhi's camp where he was enthroned to the Congress presidency in the following year. In order to justify his and Gandhi's action, both of them gave the country some exaggerated stories of Motilal Nehru's richness, 'sacrifice' etc. Anything uttered by Gandhi in those days was passed on as gospel truth, and the poor country became the worst victim of Gandhi's truth most of which were sheer myths or just gossip stories.

Motilal Nehru's son Jawaharlal was also went about as a Congress worker. He was a briefless lawyer, and a failure in Allahabad municipality. He served as a secretary of Congress when Annie Besant was dominating the Indian politics. Later both these father and son joined Gandhi's group as the latter's star was rising. Jawaharlal described the kinship between his father and Gandhi as a meeting between an introvert and an extrovert. That was true, and that was also a kinship of opportunism.

C.Rajagopalachari of the old Madras state, was a lawyer in his native town of Salem, and for the first forty years of life he did not take to active politics. He moved to Madras to practice and there with Kasturi Ranga Iyangar of the HINDU, he worked his way up. Later on Gandhi wrote about him that:

"Rajagopalachari was behind the invitation to me to visit Madras, That was the time I first met him. Due to my South African work I felt I had some sort of special right over the Tamilians and Telugus, and the good people of the South have never belied my belief--------."

Gandhi also added that:

"Among those who took conspicuous part in a small conference of leaders to thrash out the matter was Vijayaraghavachari. He suggested that I should draw up a comprehensive manual of the science of SATYAGRAHA--------The date for the HARTAL was fixed on the 30th March 1919, later changed to the 6th April.---------By that time the Rowlett Bill had never been published as an Act."

In Delhi, Gandhi had a strong and resourceful colleague in Swami Shraddhananda who organised the campaign there. In other provinces and presidencies, the new recruits helped to organise the SATYAGRAHA campaign, and some Satyagrahis of the time became famous later on due their loyalty to Gandhi.

Here it should be noted that though Mrs. Besant had all the time lived in Madras after making Adyar as her political, social and cultural headquarters, those men of Madras, especially the Brahmins, did not seem to have been close to her. They did not seem to have relished the idea that a woman, a foreign woman, doing so much for their religion and

the country. That was how those men like Natesan. Kasturi Ranga Iyangar of The Hindu, Vijayaraghavachari, Rajagopalachari and several other Brahmins were ducking their heads till a Gandhi emerged somewhere in the up North with some South African ostrich feather on his cap. However, the true nationalism never took root in the country and it did not show up in a spontaneous way anywhere in India during the first two decades of this century. It seemed that all those suddenly sprung up men and women were biding their time to come to limelight after they were all already forty or fifty years old. Those lawyer politicians saw some promising future before them with the passing of the Reform Acts of 1909 and 1919, and to take to politics as a career was the basic fact in the story of all our nationalists with some rare exceptions, however!

From now on it seemed that Gandhi took over from the elders to run the show of political agitations, and he made preparations to fight the Rowlett Bills although that did not need so much noise at all. Those neo-Congress men, after causing a split of the old Congress, perhaps, wanted to make their presence felt in the country, and this Rowlett Bill got an opportunity for them to show up.

Gandhi had requested the Viceroy not to proceed with the Bill but that was of no use. It was after that he launched a country-wide HARTAL on the 30th March 1919, and that was intensified on the 6th April 1919. He called upon the people to observe fast, hold prayers, public meetings etc. Swami Shraddhananda led a procession of Hindus and Muslims in Delhi, and he was asked to preach at Juma Masjid. The Muslims were told ~~the~~ to do the same in the Hindu temples. Swami Shraddhananda, unfortunately, became a target for the Army bullets. That ~~martyrdom~~ martyrdom of the Swami further infuriated the people and as a result, protest meetings were held in the whole of India. The Government banned all meetings, and in order to quell the disturbance, the Army was called to aid the police. Gandhi took the pledge of non-violence and agreed to defy laws as were prescribed by the SATYAGRAHA Committee.

The principles of non-violence apart, disturbances however broke out in many parts of the country. Long before that Gandhi had been condemning political violence while in South Africa through his HIND SWARAJ. But somehow or other in India he found things were going wrong in spite of his belief in the SATYAGRAHA- the 'soul force', as a superior and more effective substitute for bomb or pistol. The non-violent struggle transformed into a violent one without Gandhi being aware of that.

When the whole country was thus plunged into chaos and confusion, the reaction of the elder politicians like Mrs. Besant, Tilak, became all the more bitter. Both of them and also Srinivasa ~~Sastri~~ Sastri, Sundaram Iyer, Ramaswami Iyer, Jinnah, Sapru, Andrews, Tagore and several others did not agree with Gandhi's method of agitation. Among these Annie Besant, with her mistake being a foreign lady, was the target of criticism by Gandhi's men- the ~~second~~ fresh bunch of Gandhians. They launched an all out attack on Mrs. Besant for opposing Gandhi's views and methods. Lokamanya Tulak escaped that attack because he was an extremist Hindu. He had told Gandhi many times that he did

not 'believe in the efficacy of SATYAGRAHA as a political weapon against the rulers' and he had felt that even a HARTAL might lead to bloodshed.

Indeed, that was exactly what had happened. Gandhi's non-violent HARTAL resulted in the countrywide violent disturbances. In the Punjab, however, violence broke out to an enormous extent. Government became panicky, and declared martial law. Consequently a reign of terror was let loose and that culminated in the Jalianwallahbag episode. On the 17th April 1919, a large crowd had gathered there in the public park enclosed by high walls to protest against the Black Bills. General Dyer with an armed force of 25 Gurkhas and 25 Sikhs ordered to open fire when the crowd refused to move or clear out. But the narrow exit was blocked and there was no way left for escape, and the report was that the unarmed crowd was fired until the ammunition was exhausted. The casualties were 379 killed and 1,200 wounded. Public flogging were also resorted to, and this action of the Government was widely condemned. It was said that the British Government 'were relying mainly on the naked sword'. That also had a 'catastrophic effect on the relations between the rulers and the ruled.'

This tragic incident of Jalianwallahbagh was one of the mile-stomes of Indian history of this century. After all, and from all accounts, it was not an exceptionally great incident. Any Government would resort to such a measure to quell the revolt of the law-breakers. Even today and almost every day, not only in India, even in other countries, such things happen but, nevertheless, Jalaianwalla Bagh episode had its own significance. Those people who sought to break the law were mere political workers and those so-called SATYAGRAHIs who professed peaceful demonstration seldom maintained peace. There was a lot of loot and destruction of public properties all over the country and all that was done in the name of HARTAL. Gandhi was the leader of the civil disobedience movement but his followers behaved in an un-Gandhian way.

The second reason for giving importance to this Jalianwalla Bagh incident was that most of those people were unarmed innocent folks and some of them were just observers of fun but a good many of them were the elements of public nuisance, also. General Dyer who had led his troops to quell the rebels had warned them in advance to disperse but the people were obstinate. Gandhi's instruction to the people was to break the law for the right cause even in the face of death. Therefore, his followers stood there in a non-violent way, but the Government had to maintain law and order. Those Punjabis thought that the British Government was too good and they would not shower bullets on them.

Here it was the wrong leadership that caused this massacre. From the study of the politics of Charles Bradlaugh and Mrs. Annie Besant in the 1870s in England, one could find that they were also SATYAGRAHIs when they conducted their political agitations. They would first educate the people to obey law, inform the Government in advance all about their programme and so on. How far Gandhi had taught his people to obey the law first and break the law next, was not clear. Moreover, Indians were totally igno-

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ignorant of the things then as they are now although it was easy to gather crowds anywhere because of the teaming millions at that time and so also now. Those people did not have any political education before they were brought to the streets to face bullets. General Dyer, according to the reports, had to do it as he saw it. Governments these days too resort to that kind of method to control mob fury even these days and everywhere. When some misguided young men conducted a protest march against the Portuguese regime of Goa in the 1950s, they were all shot at.

Such things happen, and there was nothing special in the Jalianwalla Bagh incident except to say that many people died within minutes. That was the time when the country was in a mood of great agitation and the atmosphere was tense. Anyway after this massacre of Anritasar Gandhi had to admit that he had blundered. That was a ready-made excuse of Gandhi and always. He knew his mistake clearly, and those few of his newly-found followers of his too, knew what they did in the name of non-violence:

> "The call of non-violence, of self-mastery through abnegation, was something that the majority of Hindus- who are inclined to masochism- instinctively understood. It appealed directly to their religious nature--------." 10.

By whatever name one may call this mockery of SATYAGRAHA, in the end one could say that this massacre was the result of the foolishness of the people who were entrapped there. Most of the women and children who were caught there did not know what was happening and for them that gathering was another festival like any other Hindu festival. Nevertheless, the country was shocked when so many people were killed and many hundreds of them were wounded. John Gunther summarised the incident and its after-effects, thus:

> "The British were also bewildered. What could they do with people who let themselves be beaten to a pulp without lifting their hands? What to do when literally thousands of young Indians besieged the jails, demanding to be arrested? Mr. Gandhi s precepts to his SATYAGRAHI, as the passive resisters were called, are almost more than the Western mind can comprehend. The Mahatma insisted that SATYAGRAHI must harbour no anger, must not swear or curse, must never retaliate to attacks, must voluntarily submit to arrest, must never insult an opponent and must assist British officials assaulted by forgetful Indians."

After all what for was this agitation? Was it against Montague-Chelmsford Reforms? If so,it was totally unfounded and uncalled for because the Montague award was certainly a great boon to the country. It was a great step ahead in the constitutional history of India even though politicians of the time might have said about that in a hundred ways saying that Reforms were not enough. But the Liberals like Sastri, Sapru, Jinnah and many others had welcommed that, and then hoped for much more to come.

But then why was this agitation of 1919, against the Rowlett Act which Gandhi called Black Bill? What was 'black' in that? Rowlett Act was a strong measure to maintain law and order, especially during the war time. It gave police some special powers to deal with the situation. The Government retained the emergency exercised during those days of turmoil and then announced the provisions of the Act which was, of course, harsh!

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10. John Gunther- Inside Asia- Page 353.

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But such codes are always there and politicians and hooligans are also there and always to call such Bills as Black Acts. Anyway the basic fact is that Gandhi took the Rowlett Act as an excuse to launch his agitation and thus establish his national leadership. That Act did not help anyone but only Gandhi who reaped the benefit out of that.

Exactly sixty years after as this script is being prepared now, it should be again said that it was unfortunate that Gandhi used Rowlett Act for his national campaign. That is called in simple language as political gimmick. The 'supreme irony of the whole story' was that the Rowlett Act, though published, was never used by the Government who found it wholly unnecessary. Why then was the hurry for such a campaign? This mass movement was not against the Act but only against the shadow of that Act, and that resulted in the Julienwallah Bagh massacre. People like John Gunther and other wayward recorders might say that the Rewards which have come to India since 1919 have been penance for the Amritasar shame but they should know that those Reforms were already publicised long before the 'Amritasar shame', and Gandhi's self-projecting agitation was totally unnecessary.

Anyway the incident was tragic indeed, and that caused a bitter tension in the country. The British too took that seriously and made thorough enquiries of the shame. Sir Michael O'Dwyer, the Commander-in-Chief, and General Dyer, were the two men on whom everyone had turned against. The Governor-General, with the approval of the Secretary of State for India, formed a Committee with Lord Hunter, formerly the solicitor-general of Scotland in the Asquith administration, as the President of the Commission, to investigate into the disturbances in Delhi, Punjab, Bombay and elsewhere. This Commission began its hearings on the 29th October 1919, and it sat for 46 days. Sir Michael O'Dwyer, the Commander-in-Chief said, that: II.

> "I have no hesitation in saying that General Dyer's action that day (of the Julienwallah Bagh incident), was the decisive factor in crushing the rebellion."

Sir Edwin Montague wrote to the Government of India, that:

> "Brig.-Gen. Dyer's action was in complete violation of this principle (of using minimum force necessary)."

The Hunter Commission agreed with the views of the Indian Government, and said, that:

> "Gen. Dyer acted beyond the necessity of the case------beyond what any reasonable man could have thought to be necessary------He did not act with as much humanity as the case demanded. It is with pain we come to this conclusion."

The Hunter Commission tried to pin Gandhi down to the fact that his own SATYAGRAHA campaign had caused the uprising, that his own followers had committed the outrages. Gandhi admitted at one point that:

> "The thing was organised------that there was a deeplaid conspiracy throughout the length and breadth of India, a deep-rooted organization".

This statement of Gandhi did not make any sense, however. He denied any knowledge of what he said. Arthir Swinson proceeded commenting that:

> "Gandhi------denied any knowledge of it------He was nimble, adroit, and never in any danger. Sometimes to confuse the issue, or set the Committee back on its heels

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II. Arthur Swinson- 'Six Minutes to Sunset'- Page I35.

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for a moment, he would indulge in his own subtle form of jabberwocky. HARTAL, he said in reply, 'may be Satyagrahic or it may not be-------Gandhi convinced the Committee that the object of the SATYAGRAHA campaign was the removal of the unjust laws (i.e. the Rowlett Bills), and not the expulsion of the British Raj, and he and his movement had no direct responsibility for violence. As a lawyer and politician he had scored a success, but it would be interesting to know what the Saint thought about this."

From all accounts one can easily conclude that Gandhi was simply playing politics with the lives of innocent people. A lot was said of Gandhi as a saint just because he talked as such and showed himself as such but all that didn't mean anything. His only aim was to desperately out-beat Mrs. Annie Besant and Lokamanya Tilak in popularity and despite the opposition of several thinking men of respectable eminence, Gandhi launched his dramatic SATYAGRAHA hoax which ended in deaths and chaos and confusion. He inaugurated his movement with a fast and that was his another stunt of national deception:

"A fast! It shocked the politicians; it worried the statesmen. It brought a sneer on the faces of the bureaucrats at Delhi. 'A fast', they cynically said. But there was something in the simplicity of that gesture that appealed to the Indian mind-------."

Yes, Indians observed fasts during auspicious occasions and festivals and they considered fasting as a sacred item in Hindu rituals. Muslims also fast, but why a politician should fast. It smacked of a kind of humbug and coercion to get his objectives carried out by hook or by crook. This fast of Gandhi has since been a national malais and all sorts of people resort to that to build their egoes. Well common people need not know the intentions of the politicians, and when the Amritasar tragedy happened the Indian crowds reacted with revenge and they killed some innocent Englishmen. It was said that: I2.

"India was out for blood. The panic was widespread and at once the British population of Amritasar gathered behind the strong walls of the Fort seeking refuge from the wrath and vengeance of the Indians. A Bank had been set fire to. A railway goods shed and some buildings had been burnt."

All this and many other brutal things happened, and the Indian writers gave a colourful version of the whole story. Among them the Gandhian writers of Congress history which gave some distorted stories. Of course, falsehood and deception were common in fellows who moved around Gandhi. Anyway the history of Congress said about the incident, thus:

"-------General Dyer entered the place at the head of the force composed of 100 Indian troops and fifty British, while one Hamsaraj was lecturing to the audience, and he (Gen. Dyer) gave orders forthwith to fire. His own version as given later before the Hunter Commission was that he ordered the people to disperse, and then fired within two or three minutes of the order. In any case it was obvious that 20,000 people could not disperse in two or three minutes of the order. In any case it was obvious that 20,000 people could not disperse in two or three minutes, especially through that narrow outlet, and when I,600 rounds were fired, and, firing stopped only when the ammunition had run out- the casualties were, even according to the Government's version, about 400 dead--------."

Some more harsh treatments were attributed to General Dyer. It was said that he cut off the gas and electric supply of Amritapur city. He ordered public flogging. A

I2. D. F. Karaka- 'Out of Dust'.

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A public platform for whipping was erected. The C.-in-C. O'Dwyer cabled him that, 'your action correct. Lieutenant-Governor approves'. Later, Gen. Dyer told the Hunter Commission, that:

> "It was a horrible duty I had to perform. I think it was a merciful thing. I thought that I should shoot well and shoot strong, so that I or anybody else, should not have to shhot again. I think it is quite possible I could have dispersed the crowd without firing, but they would have come back again and laughed------."

It was said by many who had defended the action taken by Gen. Dyer that no one felt sorrier for it than Dyer himself. He believed that he was performing his duty.

Later, however, Dyer became a broken man. He was deprived of his command and he spent his retirement as a man condemned for his crimes. But there were many people who had sympathised with the circumstances of the time and the duties he had to perform. Gen. Dyer died in I926. Among the wreaths that were received on the occasion, was one from Rudyard Kipling with a card which said: 'He did his duty as he saw it'.

This Jallianwala Bagh incident, nevertheless, staggered the nation as well as Gandhi, who had suspended his civil disobedience movement. He spoke of his 'Himalayan miscalculation' and then prepared or preferred to wait for further movements till the masses had imbibed the fundamental principles of non-violence and non-violent SATYAGRAHA. Gandhi also broke off his relations with the British Government, and so did many others including the poet Tagore who returned the honours and knighthood bestowed on them. The whole country was thus shaken and, in fact, Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy, that:

> "It is not without a pang that I return the Kaiser-i-Hind Gold medal granted to me by your predecessor for my humanitarian work in South Africa, the Zulu war medal for my services as an officer in charge of the Indian Volunteer Ambulance Corps in I906, and the Boer War Medal for my services as assistant Superintendant of the Indian Volunteer Stretcher-bearer Corps during the Boer War of I899-I900."

All this kind of antics of Gandhi served as self-publicity and nothing else. If he was a Saint, one fails to understand why he should blame the British for the tragedy. It was his mob that broke the law, defied the orders, jeered the officials and were prepared for the consequences. Can any Government sit quiet witnessing such an unruly scene? Gandhi of course, had the reputation of talking that side and this side, and it was always difficult to know where he stood on a given issue. He did not seem to have realised that the cause for the Jallianwalla Bagh tragedy was himself, and yet he blamed the British and proceeded on saying in a self-righteous way, that:

> "I can retain neither respect nor affection for a Government which has been moving from wrong to wrong in order to defend its immorality-------The Government must be moved to repentence. I have therefore ventured to suggest non-cooperation, which enables those who wish to disassociate themselves from the Government and which, if unattended by violence, must compel the Government to retrace its steps and undo the wrongs."

Let us hear John Gunther who said that:

> "The Mahatma was wrong; the Government did not retrace its steps. Instead the lines of battle were marked out. The Indian Congress declared for SWARAJ 'by all legitimate and peaceful means' and worked out practical programme under Gandhi's guidance. He became the dictator of the Congress."

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In those days there were very few people to say that Gandhi was wrong, his methods were wrong and probably his intentions too were motivated towards his own political upliftment. That was a sweep of new national outlook. Of course, that kind of mass upsurge was seen just two years prior to that when Mrs. Besant was the Congress President, and when Gandhi kept away from those movements. Now he succeeded in displaying his own brand of nationalism and that was unfortunate, to say the least.

The intelligentia of the country did not share Gandhi's views. They found that the Reforms of I9I9 had brought much to the country and that there was no need for Gandhi's non-violent agitations which ended only in violence. They also found Gandhi as a 'dictator' of a wing of the Congress which was split by him while the rest of the senior leaders withdrew to be just the on-lookers. But those men kept quiet because they did not want to incur displeasure of the Gandhians by criticising Gandhi but then Mrs. Annie Besant raised her voice unmindful of the public reaction to her statement. She said that: I3.

> "The ~~x~~ cutting of telegraphic wires, the derailment of troop trains, the burning of railway stations, the attack on Banks--------are not the action of SATYAGRAHIs nor even of casual rioters, but of revolutionaries."

That did not mean that Mrs. Besant had no grievances against Rowlett Committee. In Bombay she saw Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Madanmohan Malaviya and others. They tried to arrange for separate delegations to be sent to England. Gandhi was then sick after a major operation but had announced that he would lead a new passive resistance movement against the Rowlett Bills starting with a 'monster protest meeting' in Bombay. Mrs. Besant heard about that and rushed to confer with the sick man and tried to dissuade him from his plan, expiating on her 72 years of experience and on the dangers she saw ahead. But the stubborn Gandhi would not desist but made her believe that he would form a small committee with himself in it, and then decide on the laws to be broken by disobedience and that the SATYAGRAHA would be limited to a few selected individuals and so on:

> "Then after minutes, to her great disappointment, Gandhi almost immediately changed his mind and announced that he would not confine his movement to selected individuals and acts." I4.

Thus Gandhi launched his civil disobedience movement, and as a result of that and in sympathy for the people's cause, several members of the Imperial Legislative Council including Jinnah and Malaviya, resigned, and Gandhi was hailed as truly great, and when the entire country, either knowingly or unknowingly, began praising Gandhi, but Annie Besant's head did not turn the either way. She was the same and she said the same. She wrote in her NEW INDIA and THEOSOPHIST journals that since I874, under Charles Bradlaugh, a major plank in her political platform had been 'to disobey a bad law and submit to the penalty of the breach', but she reminded the people that she "would never use any other than completely constitutional means".

Mrs. Besant did not agree with Gandhi's technique of SATYAGRAHA. On the 2Ist of March I9I9, she said that because of certain changes in the Rowlett Bill before it was

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I3. Mrs. Besant's letter to the Times of India,
/4 Kanji Dwarakadas- quoted by Nethercot.

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passed, and because she could no longer share Gandhi's faith in the innocuous nature of the pledge, she could not support his SATYAGRAHA movement. Foresightedly she asked:

> "Even if all SATYAGRAHIs are saints, will not their example lead the average man into disregard of law, and thus result in violence.?"

Arthur Nethercot rightly assessed that Gandhi's high-minded idealism became abominably muddied when he tried to put into practice, for he was prone to forget that most of his instruments, the Indian people, were far from being as high minded and altruistic as he. After dreaming a dream, he decided to start his new campaign by calling for a HARTAL in Delhi; in other words, a state of complete cessation from all activities of every kind. For instance, shopkeepers did not want to hurt their income by closing up shops. That caused violence. Riot broke out; dedication to passivity was forgotten; the soldiers fired four volleys, killed several people and wounded many more. Gandhi praised SATYAGRAHIs, and he could do nothing better, said the renowned author!

Mrs. Besant courageously called on all who opposed the SATYAGRAHA to say so publicly since it had now passed from a spiritual to a political movement. She reminded Gandhi through her NEW INDIA that: "A man whom all India revers, had paradoxically caused a dangerous crisis". She praised the general orderliness and spoke in good ~~terms~~ terms of the SATYAGRAH which had spread all over India, but what happened in Delhi roused her. On the 31st March 1919, Mrs. Besant wrote an editorial very strongly, and her political foes never forgot or forgave her for that inspite of her immediate apology. She said that:

> "As a Government's first duty is to stop violence--------before a riot becomes unmanageable, brickbats must inevitably be answered by bullets in every civilised country".

THE HINDU of Madras branded this statement as 'atrocious' and so also some other papers. The cry of 'Brickbats & Bullets' bombarded her all over India 'with no regard for the circumstances which had elicited her words. Her calling for a full and open investigation of what had happened in Delhi failed to propitiate her enemies'. This was the source of her future trouble. The prejudice against Gen. Dyer was now turned against the old English lady and that was the way how Gandhi's crowd behaved.

In the meantime, Gandhi proposed to buy that Bagh land for the erection of a memorial to the victims, and therefore, began to raise funds for the purpose:

> "Mrs. Besant approved the plan in general and suggested that a temple or mosque be built there so that the bitterness and hatred would not be perpetuated. When she visited Jalianwalla Bagh, she removed her shoes, walked bare-foot, and had burst into a flood of tears in a small expiation of the disgraceful deed of one of her countrymen who had to do his duty as he saw it."

Any Government anywhere would do what General Dyer did. It was not only Montague, Kipling or Mrs. Besant, even the perspective Indian thinkers, too, would agree with what General Dyer did under such enforced circumstances. After all it was a law and order issue and no Government, even that of Gandhi, would sit quiet on occasions like that. Here, however, one could see a lot of Gandhi's stunts and antics and Annie's patriotic stand with ~~f~~ courage to disagree with Gandhi's unconstitutional agitations.

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CHAPTER XI.

DESPITE OPPOSITION GANDHI GOES AHEAD.

"Before a riot becomes unmanageable, brickbats must inevitably be answered by bullets in every civilized country". This matter of fact statement made by Mrs. Besant sounded as said in a wrong time in the country that had been caught with a sweep of new nationalism. It was true that Mrs. Besant did not like Gandhi's civil disobedience and SATYAGRAHA methods and she never had reconciled with Gandhi in that respect. It was only she who was vocal in her opposition to Gandhi. Among others who had agreed with her included the late Gokhale, Sir Subramania Iyer, Charles Andrews, Rabindranath Tagore, Srinivasa Sastri, Madanmohan Malaviya, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Ramaswami Iyer and several others. As the President of the Congress of the year 1917-18, Mrs. Besant toured all over the country extensively, and continued to rouse the masses. Side by side she took up the national education movement, the all-India Scout movement, women's emancipation and other social programmes. She used to say that:

> "My chief job in India is that the country may rise to her full stature, as a free Nation, and that she may do for the world what none but she can do, pour out over the earth, from her place in the great Commonwealth, of which Britain is the Centre- the priceless spiritual treasures conserved with the object for thousands of years."

By this time Gandhi became a MAHATMA, and all over India the slogan of Mahatma Gandhi-KI-JAI rent the air. It was asked by many as to who called first Gandhi as Mahatma. Some recent writers have said that the poet Rabindranath Tagore called him so but if one had known the relationship that existed between Tagore and Gandhi one would not agree with that because Tagore's regards for Gandhi was only on the surface. Tagore was one of the ~~xxx~~ critics of Gandhi's methods and policies. Some writers like Robert Paine and Jeoffry Ashe have said that the whole country spontaneously called Gandhi- a Mahatma. Even this observation was not correct. A word like that would not come out from the street crowd suddenly and all at once. Someone must have called Gandhi as such and that someone is none other than Mrs. Annie Besant herself.

Politicians, after all, have their own way to deal with their opponents. First they start praising or flattering their opponents, and Mrs. Besant too did the same and nothing better than that in respect of Gandhi. Although she had disagreed with Gandhi's handling of his national campaigns, she kept on saying that Gandhi was 'a great man', 'a prophet', 'greatest man on earth' and so on. When a foreigner of that stature said or used so many words to describe the emerging Gandhi, obviously those boorish people of India of those days thought what she said about Gandhi was gospel truth. Whether she had genuinely meant that or not, was a different matter. Anyway Mrs. Besant, a seasoned politician by 1919, called Gandhi a Mahatma. However, years later and even now Indians would not like to give credit to a foreign lady for having called an Indian leader a Mahatma, and, therefore, they prefer to inform the recent writers that it was Tagore or some such men, the neo-Congressmen, had called Gandhi so!

The actual fact was that Gandhi was called a Mahatma by his chief adversary in her zeal to win him over. Later Gandhi was himself tired of hearing people shout that way that he wrote in his characteristic way that 'the woes of Mahatma are known only to Mahatmas'.

Though the Rowlett Act failed to create a favourable atmosphere in the country, the politicians of the liberal school had great hopes in the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms. Consequently the liberal leaders went on deputation to England in April 1919. V.S.Srinivasa Sastri was one of the leading members of the delegation. Mrs. Besant led her own Home Rule League delegation. Jamnadas Dwarakadas, a member of her delegation, wrote that: I.

> "The one person who is rendering yeoman service is Mr. Srinivasa Sastri. His undoubtedly superb equipment, his lucid and convincing oratory and above all his selfless devotion to the Motherland have created a very favourable impression on the minds of those who count."

Mrs. Besant wrote that: 2.

> "The joint select Committee was tired when it heard Mr. Sastri, but his admirably lucid criticisms of the Bill, expressed in most polished English, and showing a firm grasp of the subject and a clear insight--------soon awakened and riveted their attention-------."

About that time Mrs. Besant started a Weekly newspaper in London and called it UNITED INDIA, the first issue of which contained an article by Srinivasa Sastri. On the 22nd November 1919, Sastri and Mrs. Besant cabled their opinion to India on the Reforms and said that the Report of the Joint Select Committee had rejected all the recommendations of the Government of India and improved the Bill in many respects. They gave high praise to Lord Selbourne, the Chairman of the Committee, and Sir Montague and Lord S. Sinha, who were the other members.

When the liberals amd the Home Ruler leaguers were thus busy in London, there was another delegation of the Congress leaders at the same time who met the joint Parliamentary Committee, and that consisted of Vithalabhai Patel, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and one Khaparde, and these three were extremist nationalists in a way. These men had a tough time with other groups of delegations and with the British Committee of Congress. These Indians were found openly quarrelling on some minor issues and, in fact, it was a quarrel in London between Liberals and Extremists. Mrs. Besant brought her point of view before the Labour Party when she supported Edwin Montague's schemes of Reforms. This attitude of hers was looked down with suspicion by her opponents in India, and the extremists began to doubt her motives and accused her openly.

At a meeting held at the Albert Hall in London, Mrs. Annie Besant supported the Montague Award. Vittalabhai Patel and his group strongly opposed her views, and there was a bitter exchange of words between different parties. B.G.Tilak's man, one Khaparde, abused Mrs. Besant with some unparliamentary words, but then the old lady was more than a match to those Indians and rebutted their points of view and affirmed that India's constitutional salvation lay only in supporting and accepting the Montague Award as a preliminary step.

I. The Bombay Chronicle- the 4th September 1919,
2. Kodanda Rao- a Biography of V.S.S.Sastri.

The recent historians and the Indian leaders have amply found the correctness in the argument advanced by Mrs. Besant.

Anyway those were the days of the extremists and of Gandhi who had just then launched his own brand of extremism in the name of truth and non-violence. When they were labelled as extremists, it was obvious they ought to have been blind to realities. None of those men would recognise the good work done by Mrs. Besant, V.S.S.Sastri and others of that group. The Congress historian, a henchman of Gandhi, wrote only about Gandhi's role in the political history of the time. That man seemed to have tried to belittle the efforts of Mrs. Besant, Tilak and Sastri. Referring to the Albert Hall meeting and to the exchange of words there, Dr. Pattabhi had little to say but just a lip sympathy to Mrs. Besant's dominant role there. He said, that: 3.

> "At this distance of time and knowing as we do Mrs. Besant's great services to the Nation, we cannot help saying that a description (i.e. Khaparde's remarks) was unfortunate and undeserved in spite of Mrs. Besant's unconcealed antipathy to the Congress and its activities in London in 1919."

With this courageous stand of 'unconcealed antipathy' taken by ~~her~~ Mrs. Besant, her star in Indian politics began to wane although her views had always been technically and constitutionally correct. But the Indian mob who had started shouting Gandhi's name did not know to evaluate the situation because they would blindly uphold the views of Indians and not necessarily of a foreign old lady, however much she had been an Indian and Hindu than any born Hindus. Indians simply thought that why after all this English lady should support an Englishman's Award called Montague Award, and that was all. From then on, for some time, her political opponents began to talk against here. Tilak, Vithalbhai Patel, T.M.Nair and some other regional leaders began to attack her but Mrs. Besant, though depressed and disappointed, went ahead with her own views which she held as correct in the interest of India of the time.

When the Montague Award was published about eighteen months prior to that, it was Mrs. Besant who criticised that first saying that it was 'unworthy of England to offer and unworthy of India to accept' those Reforms. What the Reforms contained was somewhat a greater power to provinces and popular control to local bodies, and the papers of Mrs. Besant and some other papers like the Manchester GUARDIAN, the FRIEND OF INDIA, etc had criticised the report.

But after a year in 1919, Mrs. Besant realised that due to the circumstances of the time and of the country, it was better to accept the Reforms and work it up. Many of the liberals too were of that same opinion. But Gandhi's reactionary politics and the Jalianwalla Bagh episode, and the consequent confusion that ensued in the country, converted the views held by Mrs. Besant as wrong. With that the extremists and Gandhi who was till then sitting on the fence had their day. But then history was not against Mrs. Besant because as years rolled on the views she held and the causes she worked for, were much appreciated by her own adversaries as well as the country.

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3. Pattabhi Sitaramayya- History of Congress.

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Anyway during those couple of years, Mrs. Besant had to wade through troubled waters. Distorted stories about her activities spread in Europe and America, but she faced that. She refused to accept the charge that she was 'an agent of pro-German pacifist propaganda'. The mere fact of her being a supporter of the Montague Award landed her in trouble. She had, however, some ardent friends in England some of whom raised money for her in order to make her stand for election to the British parliament. She agreed to become one because she thought that by being an M.P., she could work for the cause of India effectively.

As Mrs. Besant returned to India after finishing her political work of the year 1919, rumours and gossips against her increased. Some people even went to the extent of saying that he was bought over by the British Government. People, out of sheer ingratitude, wanted to tarnish the image of the old lady and of her life-long work. They forgot that most of the Indian leaders had supported the Montague Award, and that even Gandhi had pleaded for cooperation for the success of the British war efforts as well as the Montague Reforms. Most of the Indians knew that. Why then was the outburst against Mrs. Besant?

It was clear that some of her opponents who stood against her domineering personality, had let loose a kind of propaganda against her. At a conference held at the Gokhale Hall, to consider the merits of the Montague Reforms, some delegates 'had sedulously spread the story that she had been bought over by the Government and that she could not be trusted'. Many people in Madras believed this libel, and as a result of that the meeting was marred by shoutings, hatred and suspicion, directly mostly against Mrs. Besant. That was the 'reward' she got for her selfless service!

That meeting, it was said, was the most critical one in her career. That also seemed that the South Indian Brahmin and non-Brahmin clique worked against her. Anyway dazed by the storm, and thinking in her usual way that it was her KARMA that led her to that tangle, Mrs. Besant wrote an editorial in her paper stating that: 4.

> "My young brethren, what I have done to you that you hate me so bitterly? In the Seventies of the last century, before you were born, I was working for India----- I shall continue to work for her till Home Rule is won--------I do not pretend that you do not give me pain by your hatred. Love repulsed ever turns to pain--------I believe that I have enough strength left to live until Home Rule is won. Be a little patient, if you can, till then."

But the extremists and the racial fanatics amongst the Brahmins, including THE HINDU of Madras would not be patient, although the amended resolution backed by her was passed at the meetings held at Madras and elsewhere. Apart from those Brahmin politicians who were sitting on the fence, the Brahmin proprietor of THE HINDU daily, had seen in Mrs. Besant a great rival for his newspaper industry. When his paper was struggling in circulation, that old lady of Adyar, had already had half-a-dozen papers and bulletins published from Madras and elsewhere. This must have been the main reason why the editor of THE HINDU was against her all those years.

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4. 'Annie'- by Prof. Nethercot, Vol. II, Page 279.

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At the Bombay Congress sessions, Mrs. Besant and other leaders got a big ovation, but then it was she who was still a towering figure. Gandhi did not attend the sessions 'on principle' because he did not want to align himself either with the extremist or the moderate groups. Mrs. Besant delivered the main speech. She said that Indians were fit for responsible government, and that the Congress disagreed with the formula in the Montague Award. Later in Madras, she pronounced that, properly modified, they would take a substantial step towards Congress- Home Rule League objectives. Thus she took both the moderates and extremists together, irrespective of the storm. Most of her speeches were on educating the people on her opposition as well as support to Reforms.

Lord Pentland, Governor of Madras, was replaced by Lord Willingdon, whose appointment to the post was welcommed by Mrs. Besant. It was during this time Motilal Nehru defected from her group to Gandhi's group saying that she supported Reforms, although the actual reason, as already said, was that Motilal was not chosen for the Congress presidentship that year. That was why, Jawaharlal, the son of the disgruntled Motilal, said many years later that Mrs. Besant was 'not revolutionary enough'. Anyway the reason for the defection of this Nehru tribe was sheer personal and selfish. Gandhi was quietly mustering his forces those days by changing his ideas on different subjects every now and then and then say that he would stand on principles, inner voice, and so on. However, unlike those opportunists of Gandhi's group, Mrs. Besant always worked for reasonable causes though unpopular some of those must have been. Despite criticism of misguided extremists of Tilak's group, she was always respected and feared by them. Tilak once told his men, that: "It would not do to alienate Mrs. Besant--------Her Home Rule brand may take up an adverse attitude."

By the end of the year 1919, Mrs. Besant's idea to support Montague Reforms, did not find favour with people nor would she retire from politics. She had courage of conviction, but then her famous words, 'bullets for brickbats' still resounded against her. One of the secretaries of the Congress, C.P.Ramaswami Iyer, resigned from the post as he found that his leader, Mrs. Besant 'no longer commanded audiences or public attention'. The masses whom she roused to action by her clarion call for the country's freedom and social regeneration, failed to react favourably to her. Even then she maintained that she was never angry, disappointed or disgruntled. She was always patient and trusted in the ultimate future. 4.(a)

Later, however, in spite of her impulse to resign from the Home Rule League, she was re-elected as President of the League at Delhi with Jinnah, Motilal Nehru, Srinivasa Iyangar and others as vice-Presidents. She was also elected President of the Indian Ladies' Conference. But the extremists in Madras were working against her Home Rule headquarters, and their quarrel with her became very narrow, regional and almost personal. In Karachi too, she had similar experiences and people opposed her views. Benegal Shivarao recounted later that she thought, that: 5.

4.(a) 'Annie'- by Prof. Nethercot, Vol. 2, Page 289,
5. B.Shiva Rao quoted by Nethercot, Page 285.

"Why I alone should be singled out for invective out of a minority in the Congress?'. Then she offered her own speculation sadly, that: 'Probably because I have a white skin'. In Allahabad too, she had similar experience but she didn't blame her opponents. She only said that they had so long 'writhed under insults from white person that they were powerless to resent."

That may be true! But then Annie Besant missed a strong point that was in her favour. She was then the seniormost Indian leader who had roused the masses when the masses never knew who exactly roused them. That was because all sorts of street peddlers among Indians came up as leaders and consequently the ~~high level~~ politics that was in the high constitutional level now came down to the street level. Thereby Mrs. Besant had nothing to lose but the national character had lost a great deal. The Indian leaders behaved with ingratitude against her. Gandhi had successfully split the Congress by this time and formed his own clique with those neo-Congressmen as his henchmen, and they had nothing to do with the lady who was already past seventy years of age. Gandhi quietly liked the way how things happened to his advantage, but those great constitutional lawyers and senior leaders like of the later days like Ramaswami Iyer, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Subramania Iyer, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Srinivasa Iyangar and others had agreed with the stand taken by Mrs. Besant in ~~xx~~ support of the Montague Award. Even her honest outburst like 'Bullets for brickbats' was endorsed as correct after some years because that is the way violent problems are solved all over even today.

Even after knowing all this, the Gandhian henchmen who compiled the history of Congress with the help of Mrs. Besant's diary and other records, behaved as ungratefully as any human beings could be. One paid Congress historian wrote that Mrs. Besant's ~~that~~ ~~her~~ support to the Montague Award, "it is to be feared that there was something worse which should account for this irrepressible anxiety on her part to support Mr. Montague".

But then those recorders and their records were not worth the paper on which it was written because they failed or refused to understand Mrs. Besant fully. They should have known that not only Mrs. Besant supported the Montague Award, a good many other senior leaders too, all Indians, supported the Award. Secondly, in their zeal to polish their own cooked up idea of not supporting the Award, they lost their sense of proportion. After all they were all neo-Congressmen who crowded around Gandhi to derive some importance as national leaders. Anyway it is relevant to quote Mrs. Besant where she lucidly explained her point of view. It was clear that if Gandhi and his men had heeded to her advice, the course of the country's history would have been different, and that would have been more correct and beneficient. Mrs. Besant wrote some years later, that: 6.

"To me, Independence is India's inevitable destiny. The first step to it is Dominion status- the Home Rule. For that, I helped to frame the Commonwealth of India Bill, which has been in the House of Commons since 1925------Now I protest this exaggeration of the Congress resolution. Independence is too sacred and splendid a thing to be disregarded by professions unsupported by action. Mazzini

6. The NEW INDIA of Annie Besant, the 15th November 1928.

passed weary years in exile for the independence of Italy. O'Brien wore out years in penal servitude for the independence of Ireland. What right have these, who sacrificed nothing, who risk nothing, to prostitute this glorious ideal, sanctified by suffering, immortalized by death?-------."

"Let us at least be honest, honest with ourselves, honest with others. I say frankly that the great RISHI, who is the Regent of India in the inner Government of the world, has laid down, as the policy to be followed, the Freedom of India within the Federation of Free Nations linked to the British Crown. The two countries can do more for the world in union than in separation; and, the good of the world is the supreme object. Incidentally and inevitably the good of India is thereby secured."

This was the fervent hope of Annie; that was her belief as well as understanding. It was on those lines she worked and she didn't mind the accusations heaped on her. As usual with Indians, and as seen even today among the Indian politicians without exception, her associates in politics left her company one by one. They, as already said, defected to Gandhi's side. Mrs. Besant saw that things were changing and she also knew that she had to keep Gandhi in good humour. When she was on her North Indian tour, she heard that Gandhi had been arrested at Koshi where he had been forbidden to enter. It was on that occasion she used the epithet 'MAHATMA' for Gandhi although she had used it in a casual way a couple of times before. Now she used it openly and then wrote for the first time in her paper, that:

"In this sad event of the Mahatma's arrest we see the hand of God; may His blessings cheer the great Indian leader in his solitude."

This epithet, Mahatma, used by an elder leader, for Gandhi, for the first time, gave a psychological boost and Gandhi's stature rose high. All this was due to the reason that Mrs. Besant herself was considered as an incarnation of DURGI. Such a person's tribute to Gandhi greatly benefitted him.

Most of the schemes which were attributed to Gandhi, were first initiated by Annie Besant. Untouchability, SWADESHI or native industry, national or basic education system, temple entry etc were originated by Mrs. Besant but she had to fight against odds. Exactly So she was a foreigner, a woman, she had to speak only in English and she had to face the racial and personal prejudices of Indians, especially during those days of the first two decades of this century when few Indians were educated or socially and economically advanced.

Annie Besant wore saree like Indian women, familiarised Indian customs and manners and became scholar in Indian classics. She was an ascetic who came from Europe in search of higher values. When tragic incidents took place in Amritasar, Ahmedabad, Lahore and other cities due to Gandhi's civil disobedience movement, she wrote an editorial in her NEW INDIA, which said: 'I Told You SO!', and asked the Government why it was not prepared to prevent such things from happening. In that way Annie was a constitutionalist in her actions and agitations, and she was so even from her early age. For political purposes she was praising Gandhi who was still a junior before her always 'experimenting' his movements, often committing 'Himalayan blunders'. No doubt, Mrs. Besant got totally frustrated by all that she saw happening after 1919.

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The year 1919 was a landmark in the history of India as well as Mrs. Besant. After her return from England where she went on delegation to talk in favour of Montague-Chelmsford Award, she had to face rebuffs due to the reasons already stated. She had invitations from the Theosophical Societies to visit Europe, Australia and America- both North and South, but she turned them down as she had to be busy in England as well as India.

When she visited England after five years in June 1919, she was received by many of her friends and admirers, first at Plymouth harbour and later at Paddington station. Although there were six other delegations from India, none of them could get any publicity. Mrs. Besant gave many press interviews and in one of them she talked criticising Gandhi's SATYAGRAHA and the harmful effects of his movement.

Her main opponent was, perhaps, Gandhi. As the exchange of words took place at the meeting held in Albert Hall, men like Satyamurti of Madras, went on 'recklessly attacking' the stand taken by Mrs. Besant. This display of disunity among Indians in a foreign land was, she felt, further prejudiced the English people against the whole cause. Satyamurti, Khaparde and other new-commers were just taking pride in attacking an elderly politician like Mrs. Besant rather than serving any cause. They latter bragged that they 'brought down the lion' (or lioness!).

But the lioness would not bend that easily. She argued more vehemently and captured the English press and the public while the Indians who went with her just roamed in the city. Mrs. Besant found time also to tour the country extensively up to Wales and Scotland and talked all over on women's suffrage, labour situation, Home Rule, Theosophy and co-Masonry. Although it was raining, she kept on speaking at Trafalgar Square about Russia, and also in favour of Home Rule there as well as for Ireland and Scotland. She also met all her old friends like Sidney Webb, Herbert Burrows, Bernard Shaw and others. She even announced her intention to join the Labour party of England. She got a good press in England, and returned to India in December 1919. At Bombay she was welcommed by her supporters in the city, and from there she proceeded to Benares.

So what happened in India in the months of April and May 1919, and then during Mrs. Besant's absence in India from June to December that year, were all a sort of political stunts, some politicians making much of the Montague Award and the Rowlett Act. Some would join Gandhi to denounce both those Bills in toto and in the process there was a setback to Annie Besant's reputation as a nationalist. She was very outspoken on all that she had felt whereas Gandhi was quietly trying to take advantage of those developments. Annie wanted to lead and educate the people whereas Gandhi in his own way was playing upon the mood of the masses as all wily politicians usually do.

In Madras some of Mrs. Besant's admirers collected funds for a Besant statue- a marble bust, but THE HINDU daily, in consistent to its Brahmin fanaticism, 'trumpeted her conversion to an anti-Indian point of view'. That was the way the things worked against her in those days. In Bombay some people who were close to Gandhi were trying

to wreck her reputation. The Bombay Home Rule League met to condemn her for speaking against Gandhi. But Mrs. Besant promptly repudiated the accusation, and then separated herself from that wing of the Home Rule League. It was presumed that Muhammad Ali Jinnah must have played the game against her although he was not her bitter opponent.

In the meantime, the Ahmedabad branch of Home Rule League asked her to withdraw her remarks on the Rowlett Act, but she was not prepared to oblige those people who probably spoke for Gandhi. There was another reason for all this opposition against Mrs. Besant and that was mainly due to the quarrel between Tilak's and her Home Rule League. In Allahabad, as already said, Motilal Nehru and her son, left the Home Rule League in May 1919 and defected to the split wing of Gandhi's Congress which welcommed them with open arms. By this time it was clear to Mrs. Besant that the entire opposition created against her was only due to her talking against Gandhi's method of SATYAGRAHA movement. She resigned from the Home Rule League in disgust but with a fervent feeling for having had to take such a step especially from an Organization which was founded by herself. She signed the letter herself stating that 'Your rejected colleague and servant'. At that time there were forty branches of her National Home Rule League. When she travelled to England she represented her own Home Rule League, Indian Women's Federation, Madras Merchants' Chamber and some other Organizations.

Mrs. Besant stayed in Benares for a few days after her return from England and then left for Amritasar. She attended the Congress session of the year. Motilal Nehru, her quondam admirer and supporter, succeeded in becoming the President of the Congress, after he joined Gandhi's camp. At the Amritasar Congress session there were more leaders than commoners, and among them were Shaukat Ali and Muhammad Ali, the chief propagandists of the Khilafat movement. Though Mrs. Besant was considered politically an outcaste at that time, she remained dauntless and as active as ever. Her motion to relieve General Dyer from his command, was supported by Tilak, and it was unanimously passed. And then, despite Gandhi, Jinnah, Malaviya and others, who said that the Montague Award was inadequate, Mrs. Besant welcommed the Award. She boldly argued that the Reform Act was 'the gateway of freedom to the Indian nation'. However, her motioh was defeated as she had only a few supporters. It was said that the vast assembly 'still listened to her with respect and patience'.

What is important to note here was that Mrs. Besant was an ideal leader but misfit as a politician. Every Indian in politics, including Gandhi, was trying to come to limelight and prominence, and Mrs. Besant found it very difficult to put their urges and egoes down to the minimum. Even Bal Gangadhar Tilak, while in England in 1919 with his delegation, behaved as a moderate and in some points he supported Mrs. Besant, but in India he became an extremist after his return as he usually was. All this was due to their having no principle behind their aims and ideals. Tilak was expecting the honour of being elected as President of the Congress in 1920 but he died in the month of August that year. It was said that Tilak's "treachery was more than Mrs. Besant could endure".

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This was the time when Gandhi had almost established himself as a national leader. He took such causes as SWADESHI, untouchability, prohibition, etc in order to take the masses with him. By his protest to the Rowlett Act and the Reforms of 1919, he kept the Government at bay. To get the support of the Muslims, he supported them with his Khilafat movement although 'there ~~was~~ were very few Hindus who showed any interest' in that. After all that was an uncalled for activity of Gandhi which went against the interests of the country and of himself. The ultimate result of this extra-territorial movement was that the Muslims began to desert Gandhi one by one because they could not trust any Hindu to be loyal to their interests. Some even said that Gandhi played some cheap politics just in order to curry ~~the~~ favour of the Muslims.

Gandhi had several Muslim friends ~~even~~ from his early days, and even from the days of his ancestors for five generations who had served in the courts of Muslim princes. He had believed that the KORAN was divinely inspired. "Hindu-Muslim unity is an unalterable article of faith', he wrote. At the Khilafat conferences, Gandhi urged Hindus to march side by side with their Muslim brethren but then the Hindus did not react favourably because the Hindu culture was entirely different from that of the Muslims. Gandhi was fighting in vain a battle that he ultimately lost.

Those Muslim leaders of the time, especially the Ali Brothers, made Gandhi an instrument to play their communal politics. They formed a Committee to bring pressure on the Viceroy 'who was in no position to put together the dismembered Turkish empire'. Moreover, the affairs of the Turkish Sultan had gone to such a point that no one, either the British, the Turks or the Indian Muslims, could have done anything.

Gandhi's non-violent non-cooperation or SATYAGRAHA, took some fancy turns. His was 'an audacious revolutionary movement against the British Raj', but then some of his programmes were so much revolutionary that the country viewed them with some cynicism. Some of his opponents said that his movement went against the interests of the people. He had called Indians to endure suffering in order to achieve their aims. He called on all title holders to surrender those titles, medals and other honours. He asked lawyers to suspend all their practices, all government officials to leave their offices, and all parents to recall their childrem from the Government schools and colleges. The next step of his was to call the soldiers to lay down their Arms, and the people of the country to bring about a massive refusal to pay taxes.

To think of all this was a full-time job for Gandhi who made best use of the British liberalism to play the kind of politics he played. The last two of the above-said programmes, were very serious and those would easily provoke violence and bloodshed. Even his simpler methods of non-cooperation programmes have caused a countrywide stir, and those ended in many tragic incidents. The non-violent Gandhi always spoke violently, but in a low voice, in order to stir the people. He knew and also had expressed many a time that the British and the British Government were really good, moderate and liberal, and that was why an otherwise sly Gandhi would address the Government, that:

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"You may hang us on the gallows, you may send us to prison, but you will get no co-operation from us. You will get it in jail or on the gallows, but not in the regiments of the army. You will not get it in the legislatures or in any departments of the Government service.

"The British empire today represents Satanism, and they who love God can afford to have no love for Satan.

"This Empire has been guilty of such terrible atrocities that, if it did not apologise for them to God and the country, it would certainly perish. I will further go and say that unless it so apologised, it was the duty of everyone to destroy it."

It is difficult to say that Gandhi had any instinct for non-violence as he had been professing to have. This strong language was another gimmick of Gandhi, and with these words he desired to stir the masses and not the Government. 'It was the duty of every Indian to destroy', said Gandhi, and destroy whom? Why after all the Government be destroyed when he knew that the British had done so much and which he had acknowledged many a time. What is the reason for this sudden and unwarranted outburst for inciting violence and bloodshed? Robert Payne said, that: 7.

"Perhaps this vehemence arose from sickness and the haunting consciousness of failure, for he (Gandhi) continued to complain that the fire had gone from him, there was no strength in his words, and his mission was over."

That was a desperate bid of Gandhi to take the country with him. In that way Gandhi had felt ~~that~~ even twenty-five years before he was assassinated that his 'mission was over' What then did he do after all that long afterwards? He simply created some opportunities to keep his fight go on and those millions shouting Gandhi-ki-Jai afforded him some spirit. The scene was described thus:

"Huge crowds greeted Gandhi; when his train stopped at village stations, people from miles around would be there to greet him; and, if he dismissed them, they would climb onto the train, storm into his compartment, and insist on the right of having his DARSHAN. 'Mahatma Gandhi-ki-Jai' was their war-cry, and he had little success when he asked them to shout instead- 'Hindu-Mussalman-ki-Jai'. At those railway stations the noise was deafening. 'It tore me to pieces', Gandhi would say bitterly, and yet he was glad. He knew now that he had an immense following even though he realized that the peasants were more engrossed in seeing his face than studying the message."

After Tilak's death in 1920, Gandhi was the unrivalled leader. Annie Besant had almost withdrawn by that time for these reasons: i) She was getting older; ii) she was an European lady, though an ardent Hindu, iii) her past services to the country were soon forgotten by an ungrateful country, iv) She did not approve of Gandhi's 'Mock-fights' in the name of non-violent non-cooperation, v) her remarks 'bullets for brickbats' had offended people, vi) she consistently said that the Montague Reforms should be accepted as a first step for freedom, vii) Indians knew Gandhi's activities in South Africa but they did not know all about Annie's gallant services in England and in the world of Theosophy, viii) She never showed herself as a wily politician and she never played on the mob, ix) the Indian leaders were doubtlessly jealous of Annie's worldwide reputation and, finally, x) there were very few educated men in India who had known her well whereas there were millions of uneducated men who simply shouted Gandhi-ki-Jai without knowing who he was and what he did and what he stood for!

7. Robert Payne on Gandhi - P. 349

Robert Payne on Gandhi - Page 349.

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But then Annie Besant was not alone in her protest against the Gandhian techniques. There were many others and one of then was V.S.S.Sastri of Madras. Gandhi's Khilafat politics was viewed with justified scepticism by many. At the Congress sessions they claimed 'full responsible government in accordance with the principle of self-determination which had been proclaimed by the American President, Woodrow Wilson'. Before such an idea the Montague Award was dismissed as 'inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing.' 8.

Gandhi, however, kept on travelling all over the country with Shaukat Ali. Speaking at Madras on the I5th May I920, he said that: 9.

"The Khilafat was just a great cause", and called on the people "to winit under his banner or die".

What kind of AHIMSA hoax was that, asking people to die to some far away and irrelevant cause. Here one could see that Gandhi was nothing if not a politician who could play politics as it suited him and him alone. Mrs. Besant, Tilak, Malaviya, V.S.S.Sastri and several others did not like this TAMAASHA because they saw Gandhi fighting not against the British but against the orthodox Hindus like Tilak, Malaviya and, of course, Annie Besant.

Anyway due to the persuasion of Gandhi and the Ali brothers, a good many ignorant as well as opportunistic Hindus joined the Khilafat Committee. In March I920, the Indian Khilafat Committee sent a deputation to London, and that was headed by Muhammad Ali, one of the Ali Brothers. And Gandhi, at every convenient time, would justify his actions by remembering his old South African days. He said that he had realised that there was 'no genuine cooperation between Hindus and Muslims' and that the Muslim cooperation was necessary in the struggle for the freedom. Therefore, he sought the friendship of Muslims and then made the Hindu-Muslim unity as one of his main national issues. With that kind of divisive point, Gandhi added a couple of more controversial points to his list of objectives and those were the acceptance of Hindustani as the LINGUA FRANCA of India and the linguistic redistribution of the provinces.

Gandhi thus created problems to the country as early as that. By showing himself as he alone was the champion of the Muslims, Gandhi lost the trust of a good many leading Muslims and Hindus and those included among the Muslims, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and among Hindus D.Vinayak Savarkar. In July I920, Tilak had told Gandhi that politics was 'a game of worldly people' and a few days later on the Ist of August he died. If Tilak had lived for a few more years, he too would have reacted very strongly to Gandhi's opportunistic politics. V.Srinivasa Sastri was a stalwart of the day to disagree with Gandhi on many points and about Khilafat politics of Gandhi, he said, that:

"I agree with Mr. Gandhi in condemning the violation of Mr. Lloyd George's promise (that Turkey would not be dismembered). But I do not agree with him in con-

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8. Robert Payne on Gandhi- Page 349,
9. Kodanda Rao on V.S.S.Sastri- Pages 83 & 84.

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considering the people of India in any sense a party to the wrong-------We, in India, are not responsible at all, not even for the actions of the Government of India-------.

"I cannot, I confess, see the obligation resting on me to withdraw cooperation from a Government which has done right, in order to influence another government which had sone wrong, merely because the former is politically subordinate to the latter. The whole argument is fantastic to a degree."

Right hon'ble Srinivasa Sastri was not convinced by the argument that non-cooperation was not anti-Government. He said that:

"An organised movement on the part of the subjects, to be executed in four stages, each more effective than the preceding, intended to embarrass at first and then utterly paralyse the machinery of government, until not that government but a superior government 6,000 miles away is 'compelled' to give redress- is, if anything, but an abuse of language to say that such a tremendous upheaval is not anti-Government,"

When Gandhi claimed that his civil disobedience movement was logical and harmless, Sastri rejoined: "I cannot agree that it is logical, and I dispute the premises". In a way Sastri echoed the same thing what Mrs. Besant had said before him when she bitterly criticised Gandhi's technics. Sastri said, that:

"Mr. Gandhi may be justified in expecting strict compliance with his specific commandments from those that have been in living contact with his personality in his ASHRAM and assimilated its discipline. Is he not incurring grave risks and grave responsibilities when he expects the same compliance from casual SATYAGRAHIs who submit to his rule for a certain purpose under the stress of an over-powering emotion, who feel that in a way they are not obeying their own religion in submitting to that rule, and we will naturally give play to their own impulses the moment they become impatient?"

It did not end there. Gandhi, perhaps, had no better arguments to face Sastri, but said that 'arm-chair' politicians had not appreciated the intensity of Muslim feeling, that inaction would certainly invite violence, and so on. Gandhi was a man who would seldom agree with others. He wanted only his views to go and that was how he showed himself all those years. Anyway Srinivasa Sastri was not convinced, and shot back that:

"I am not always rocking in an arm chair and do not under-rate the Muslim feeling. But I cannot altogether suppress the thought which is daily growing to be a conviction, that Mr. Gandhi's advocacy has given the outraged feeling of the Muslim community a degree of strength, justification and authority which it would otherwise have lacked, and brought to its aid the active support of sections of non-Muslim communities. It It is difficult now to speculate on what might have happened if Mr. Gandhi had not identified himself with the Khilafat movement--------."

Gandhi said that non-cooperation would be a test of the sincerity of Hindu friendship for Muslims. Sastri did not share that view. He said that "the test is too hard".

Rt. hon'ble Sastri, a renowned orator and parliamentarian, thus smashed Gandhi-Shaukat Ali 'mischief' of Khilafat politics in India. There were many others who spoke in similar terms at that time but Sastri was a giant among them. In fact, it was Sastri who was an ardent disciple of Gokhale and it was he, who succeeded Gokhale as President of that august organization- the Servants of India Society, and it was Sastri and his cplleagues who kept Gandhi out of their organization because they had never reconciled with

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reconciled with Gandhi's politics. Gokhale had started disagreeing with Gandhi and Tilak had openly expressed about his differences with him, and Mrs. Besant and V.S.S. Sastri vehemently opposed those illusive programmes of Gandhi.

But then Gandhi had quite a number of dumb stooges around him, and among them Motilal Nehru, the Patel Brothers, Srinivasa Iyangar, Chittaranjan Das, Rajagopalachari, Rajendra Prasad, Khan Abdul Ghaffur Khan, Maulana Azad, Jawaharlal Nehru, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu. and others. Many of these were the people who had defected from Mrs. Besant's group. Surrounded by these elements of opportunism, Gandhi went ahead with his national service unmindful of the criticism of the intelligentia of the country. He wrote to the Viceroy Lord Chelmsford in August I920, to call for a conference of Indian leaders and high Government officials to deal with the crisis brought about by the massacre in Amritasar and the unresolved problem of the Caliphate. He also announced his intention to launch the non-cooperation movement. At the special meeting of the Congress held in Calcutta in September I920, Gandhi's battle-cry of 'Khilafat and Amritasar' won the day.

From I920 or even I9I9 onwards, all those persons who became the Presidents of the Congress, were Gandhi's nominees, but among them there was one young rebel in the I930s, and he was Subhas Chandra Bose. However, now in December I920, the above said Gandhian programme was discussed at the Nagpur Congress sessions, presided over by Vijayaraghavachar, and the decisions confirmed. Among the persons who were critical in varying degress and on several points, were Kelkar, Jinnah and Mrs. Besant. Several others of the older group stayed away from the Congress sessions because they felt Gandhi had already split the Congress taking with him a good number of extraneous elements and on whom he started showering tributes saying that they were great men of sacrifice and so on.

At this sessions of the Congress of I920, SWARAJ or full independence was demanded, and that item was added as an objective of the non-cooperation movement. The Congress also resolved to boycott the Montague Reforms and the elections under them. This decision precipitated a final and complete breach between the two wings of the Congress- the one wing was that of Gandhi which he took with him along with his new recruits and defectors, and the other wing of the old school was labelled as that of the Liberals. From now on those old guard Congress members, or Liberals, could no longer command the votes, and Gandhi's call for non-cooperation, and the complete boycott of the Government was accepted by the Congress as the programme to be followed, and Gandhi's men shouted their slogan- 'Swaraj within a Year'!

People these days say that Gandhi and poet Rabindranath Tagore had admired or respeacted each other, but that was not so. The truth was that poet Tagore criticised Gandhian programmes more bitterly than Mrs. Besant, V.S.S.Sastri, Tilak, Srinivasa Iyangar, Jinnah and several others. The Western-educated man's anti-Western attitude, his civil disobedience movement, the Khilafat agitation etc were severely criticised by Rabindranath Tagore, and in that the poet did not mince words. He said, that: IO.

IO. Robert Payne on Gandhi- Pages 350- 35I.

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"To reject foreign domination was laudable; to reject Western civilization, was not only not laudable but dangerous and futile---------There were more important things to fight for. We are to emancipate Man from the meshes that he himself has woven round him."

The difference between Tagore and Gandhi were many-sided. Gandhi's politics seemed to have been just vengeful, spiteful and ungrateful, especially towards his opponents as well as the British. Gandhi was against Western education, against science, against industry fostered by machines, etc. Tagore had detected in Gandhi long before that the strain of nihilism and 'a fierce joy of annhilation'. Here it is relevant to remember Gandhi's call to people to die for the cause that he and he alone had held good, his call to students, civil servants, and even the army personnel to walk out and leave the country to chaos and disorder, his mockery of fasting only to coerce others, his splitting of the Congress organization and foisting on the country his own stooges after showering on them tributes as great men of sacrifice, his disgusting as well as futile way of flirting with Muslims in the name of the Khilafat movement, his stubborn ways to cling to his own views and forcing it on others, commanding his associates to follow him as obedient servants follow a dictator with virtual submission- all worked against him in the end. Even his own children turned against him. The henchmen who had surrounded him did so in their own interest and that did pay them dividends after 1937 or after 1947. But essentially Gandhi enjoyed the bloody consequences of his own so-called SATYAGRAHA movement and that was why he adamently stuck to his own ways but behind the high sounding words like SATYA, AHIMSA, and so on.

The poet Tagore had feared that Gandhi's non-cooperation programmes would lead on a national scale to orgies of frightfulness and senseless devastation. In his eyes Gandhi was a man unloosing forces over which he had no control, and there was no end to the possibilities of error. That was what Mrs. Besant, V.S.S.Sastri, Jinnah, Gokhale, Tilak and other intellectuals too had said many a time. But Gandhi knew to give appropriate answers to given situations. To the argumenets of poet Tagore, he answered by disclaiming any intention except to counter evil with Truth:

"Non-cooperation is a protest against an unwitting and unwilling participation in evil", said Gandhi and then continued that the poet, he said, had his 'fetish of literary training'. My experience, said Gandhi, 'has proved to my satisfaction that literary training by itself adds not an inch to one's moral height and that character building is independent of literary training."

Rabindranath Tagore, however, was not prepared to be convinced by this peculiar Gandhian phraseology, nor did the poet agree with the political strategist 'who dangled before the country the bait of getting a thing of inestimable value dirt-cheap and in double quick time'. He compared Gandhi to a conjurer who made gold out of a stone. Tagore wanted men to behave with reason, not according to the laws of oracles. He intensely disliked Gandhi's assumption of a kind of dictatorship over the minds of young and poor Indians, for, when he attempted to argue with some of Gandhi's followers he found himself, accused of treason, said Tagore, and wondered what the world was coming to.

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CHAPTER XII.

AGAINST ANNIE BESANT THAN AGAINST BRITAIN.

Yes, there was a time when the whole of India behaved not with reason or logic but according to 'the law of oracles'. For an absolutely poor and illiterate country of sixty-five years back, Gandhi was an oracle and he 'assumed a kind of dictatorship over the minds of young as well as illiterate Indians', and those who contradicted him 'found themselves accused of treason'. Those realistic and candid thinkers like Rabindranath Tagore, Srinivasa Sastri, Charles Andrews, Muhammad Ali Jinnah and several others found themselves in an uncomfortable position of being anti-national, and they wondered 'what the world was coming to'.

That was the assessment of the situation of the time when Gandhi was hailed as a leader and saviour by the millions who had never known him or seen him. And poor old Annie Besant was the worst victim of this Gandhian hypnotism. It was she, perhaps, due to her being an English woman, suffered more from the misunderstandings than any of our Indian leaders who spoke against Gandhi. In those days those henchmen of Gandhi were talking against Annie's leadership but then at least a decade had to pass to know the truth that she was absolutely correct in what she did, and it was with Gandhi and his followers the things went wrong. Although Annie was asserting herself of the correctness of her stand, the over-zealous Gandhians were ridiculing her views from every platform. With all that she continued to get good receptions wherever she went, and common people, women and children would line up in streets. In fact, she was the first Indian political leader to draw large crowds during those momentous years of 1915 and 1919. The women of India came out of their homes for the first time during her leadership. Her presidentship of the Indian National Congress in 1917-18, was a spectacular show that had ever held and her presidential speech was a scholarly thesis.

The funniest part of the neo-Congressmen of Gandhi's group, was that in their wild game of hunting after the shadow of their opponent, Mrs. Besant, they did not know to make their accusation at least seemingly honest. Mrs. Besant was the one who had fought for women's suffrage, decades, first in Europe and then in India and, in fact, she was a pioneer fighter in that field, too! But then a suddenly emerged Indian, one Vittalbhai Patel, a man of Gandhi, came too late on the scene to say that she 'did not work hard for women's suffrage'. But that statement based on his own prejudice, was soon belied when thousands of women and children lined in streets in all the cities she went, and those women yearned to have her DARSHAN.

Mrs. Besant, as a shrewd politician, never bothered about all that the people said about her. She went ahead despite rejections of her ideas. At a function in Bombay, she was one of the honoured guests, and when she rose up to speak she was shouted down.

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That same feat was repeated in Calcutta in September I920 during the special session of the Congress but she didn't mind the misguided and misinformed people creating scenes and trying to shout her down. She knew that all such things were master-minded by some disgruntled Gandhian hoards. A NEW INDIA correspondent who was present on the occasion, said that he could not understand 'how any civilized society could treat an old lady and ex-President of the Congress in such a fashion!' But he did not think if India had yet attained to a status of being called civilized in I9I9 or I920. But Mrs. Besant who had by then known India after her stay for over 25 years would simply say that the crowds had changed and not she, and her principle had been the same all along, she said.

In November I920, at Bombay Mrs. Besant faced a mob of yelling students, and they shouted 'Gandhi-ki-Jai' and that was a new sweep of Gandhi-mania in India. When there would be 'mania' of that sort there need not be any reason or rhyme in the behaviour of the people- be they young or old.

It seemed that Gandhi's slogan of Hindu-Muslim unity was just his political stunt to come up as a politician and thus build up his leadership. That seemed to have been so because some leading Muslims who were with him slowly retreated from his group because they found that the Hindu politicians not subscribing to their Khilafat movement in spite of their having Gandhi as their chief Hindu-Muslim bridge-builder. Both Shaukat Ali and Muhammad Ali's ambitions were frustrated because they could not get the expected support for a cause of 3,500 miles away from India. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Khan Abdul Ghaffur Khan and his brother Khan Saheb, stuck to Gandhi although all these men were staunch Muslims who agitated for the Caliphate. They and the rest of the Muslims who were with Gandhi, were called by a new name- Nationalist Muslims.

Mrs. Besant's challenging ideas were too bitter for the Indians of those days to swallow. Not only did she criticise Gandhi's civil disobedience and Khilafat movements, she also said that his vain effort to bring Muslims and Hindus together was ~~characterised~~ just an excuse for his non-cooperation with the British Government. Till I920 Gandhi had never become a member of any Home Rule Organization, but in April I920, he somehow joined Mrs. Besant's Home Rule League and was elected President. That must have been to 'humour his chief adversary' Mrs. Besant, the people thought.

But they never agreed on any national programme even thereafter. The visit of the Prince of Wales was scheduled to some day in I92I, and Gandhi threatened to boycott if the prince should carry out his plan of visiting India. Mrs. Besant, however, supported the idea of the visit of the Prince. When the Hunter report was published she wrote a series of editorials in her paper reminding people all that she had predicted on the outcome of Gandhi's SATYAGRAHA policy.

Some writers on Gandhi, in order to boost the spirit of their hero, took the above-said controversial point to the extent of saying that Mrs. Besant condoned Dyer's action as wise 'in times of tension'. But ~~that was not correct~~ that was not correct. She had been

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consistent on the point that 'force must be met by force'. As all civilized citigens, she gave importance for maintaining law and order and not for breaking it just for sentimental nationalism. If the crowd had obeyed orders, and if they behaved in an orderly way or in a non-violent way as Gandhi had been saying, there would not have been police firing in Amritasar, Bombay, Delhi and elsewhere. Anyway it was Mrs. Besant who had the courage to loudly proclaim saying 'bullets for brickbats', despite the fact her bold utterances like that made her unpopular for some time.

There was yet another instance for Gandhi's obstinate attitude to take his people in the way he wanted. He planned a mass SATYAGRAHA movement. Mrs. Besant promptly warned him in July I920 through her NEW INDIA, on his 'mad, dangerous and fantastic methods of non-cooperation movement'. His call for people to non-cooperate with the Government, to the officials to walk out of their offices, students to walk out of the schools, lawyers to walk out of the courts, title-holders to renounce their titles and honours etc were all very much resented. Otherwise it was Gandhi who was advocating support to the British as he did in I899, I906, I9I4 and in I8I8. However, now when he became a reponsible office-bearer of the Home Rule League, he announced his SATYAGRAHA movement with the above-said objectives, and consequently Muhammad Ali Jinnah and twenty others resigned from the Home Rule League, and within just seven-and-twenty years Jinnah succeeded in teaching Gandhi and his henchmen that what they had been playing all those years was mere selfish, devisive, destructive as well as anti-national politics. What Annie Besant had feared and even warned that it was only that, was later shown by Jinnah by actually being a leading figure in seeing the country that was built up by the British as a sub-continent, was later on sliced into two with all the holocaust and bloodshed that accompanied those tragic events.

There was, on the whole, an unhealthy atmosphere in the country after I920. There were many opportnunists, anti-nationalists and Hindu fanatics behind Gandhi. They even went to the extent of saying that Gandhi was almost a person with divine powers. That certainly caused to boost Gandhi's name as a leader with more shouts like Gandhi-KI-JAI. That made Gandhi to carry his schemes of the national movement, as Robert Payne put it, to the edge of violence and then subtly retreating. 'To the charge that he was a dictator', Gandhi replied, that he was sorry that people had blindly and unthinkingly followed him, and he added in January I92I, that: I

"In matters of conscience I am uncompromising. Nobody can make me yield."

But Tagore and several others wondered whether Gandhi was not 'growing enamoured of his own doctrines, which is a dangerous form of egotism that even great people suffer at times'.

Gandhi, in his sudden zeal to protest everything that was British, decided to boycott the new diarchical Provincial councils formed in accordance with the Reforms Act, and that programme too was endorsed by his men despite opposition of the senior members of the Congress, including Annie Besant.

I. Robert Payne on Gandhi- Page 35I.

According to one report, Motilal Nehru had originally met M.A.Jinnah and Madanmohan Malaviya and several others, and had decided to oppose Gandhi's resolution, but when a preliminary vote was taken, Motilal Nehru had 'treacherously ~~shifted~~ shifted over to Gandhi's side with his son' who was still unemployed even after he passed his 30. This father and son team, created by Mrs. Besant, always played an opportunistic role after defecting to Gandhi's shelter, ~~whose~~ victory as far as the above resolution was concerned, ~~and that~~ was gained only by going out to the streets and coming back with new one-hundred 'delegates' to vote for non-cooperation. That was the way Gandhi and his 'robots' which were behind him carried on the day, and Gandhi made himself sure that he needn't mention all these facts when he wrote things about himself.

One of Gandhi's crank proposals was that Indians should withdraw from public offices, educational institutions, courts, armed services etc. He didn't want those institutions like the Hindu University, Aligarh University and Khalsa College which functioned as national ~~institutions~~ institutions and yet patronised by the British. This kind of movement of Gandhi was publicly opposed by Madan Mohan Malaviya and Mrs. Besant who had worked for a long time to develop the educational structure of the country. Anyway it was clear that Gandhi was fanatically opposed NOT to the British but to Mrs. Besant. His bitterness and prejudice had gone to an extent of retaliating her in a lecture to the students of Ahmedabad by urging all students to walk out of any school or college founded by her. In all this one could see very little of 'human' in Gandhi.

That was the way those men played politics just to court cheap popularity and to play down that pioneer nationalist, Annie Besant, who had absent-mindedly called Gandhi a Mahatma. Thus it seemed that Gandhi did not begin his politics in India as an ideal Mahatma. The slogan that was heard in the country- 'Gandhi-ki-jai' was just a mob frenzy. Annie was of the opinion that Gandhi was a disciple of 'a Western anarchist' and had not been influenced by Indian culture. 2.

Annie suggested in 1920 that Gandhi should become President of the National Congress and shoulder full responsibility for its actions because it was already under his ~~it~~ full control. But Gandhi preferred to stay out and play his role behind the scenes. For that year he choose one of his South Indian stooges, Vijayaraghavacharya, as President. Gandhi had caught two or three South Indians of Madras to counter-act the influence of Mrs. Besant in the South, but the elderly lady warned Gandhi of the precipice opening before him, and hoped that some flash of lightening would show it to him. She surmised that through his 'wild whirling words' and ravings and his references to swords and violence he was obviously trying to get the Government to arrest him. His virtual predicting of the coming SWARAJ within a year, she maintained, was insincere for he knew better. Gandhi's resolution at the Nagpur session of the Congress said, that:

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2. Annie- a Biography by Nethercot, Vol. II, Page 305.

expresses

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talks---------he is direct, and expresses himself well in excellent English with a fine appreciation of the value of the words he uses. There is no hesitation in him and there is a ring of sincerity in all that he utters, save when discussing some political questions--------His religious and moral views are admirable------ though I must confess that I find it difficult to understand his practice of them in politics."

In this the most important part of what he said was that Gandhi was found sincere 'save when discussing politics', and those words eclipse everything else that he said. It also confirms the views of Mrs. Besant, Jinnah and several others about Gandhi. However, after a few months Lord Reading found Gandhi's speeches becoming increasingly violent. Gandhi gave hopes to the people that SWARAJYA would come within a year and, of course, Mrs. Besant promptly ridiculed all such utterances of Gandhi, whose next campaign was against the visit of the Duke of Connaught. Gandhi politely wrote to him that he had nothing against him personally but wanted him to understand the non-cooperation of the country to his visit. Later Gandhi directed students to strike in Calcutta, advised them to burn their books and abandon the idea of taking up literary or white collar jobs. Instead of all that he told them to take to spinning wheels and thus take the message of political and economic freedom to the masses.

One finds it very difficult to understand how the elite of the country remained as passive spectators of this kind of antics of a desperate SATYAGRAHI who simply played with the slogan of 'truth and non-violence', perhaps, to mislead the unsuspecting millions. Though the people could know Gandhi's gimmicks, they appeared to have been helpless. But then it was interesting to find one and only one person in Mrs. Annie Besant jeering at Gandhi through her NEW INDIA bulletin for advocating 'a new primitivism' for India with no railways, no machines, no electricity but only spinning wheels, donkeys and candles.' Of course, except those few henchmen of Gandhi, the rest of the intellectuals of the country too held the same view.

But Gandhi went ahead in his own way. In his effort to out-do Annie Besant, he started his own brand of schools where only spinning and Hindustani were taught. Gandhi in a childish spirit of rivalry, started a few schools and his 'new College in Calcutta was housed in a far more palatial quarters than Annie Besant's in Benares and Adyar.

Mrs. Besant had founded a net-work of national schools and national colleges, one of which was the Benares Hindu University and while doing so, she roused the masses to action. She mastered the Hindu scriptures, wrote many books on Hindu philosophy, including the GITA, and went round the country educating the slumbering nation. Gandhi in that way was a later-commer. After his return to India, he straightaway plunged into politics, and that happened to have been a politics of spite. Since Mrs. Besant could talk only in English, Gandhi purposefully, or rather spitefully, went all over, talking in his own Gujarati or Hindustani, and thus he sowed the seed of liguistic bickerings and divisions of the country. All this was a movement not against the British but only against Mrs. Annie Besant. That was a desperate bid of Gandhi to overtake the old lady and dominate himself as a leader unrivalled!

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Mrs. Besant was a person who was educated in the school of the world apart from her being a honours graduate in science, whereas Gandhi did not go to University excepting the Inner Temple. Annie's experience in the field of religion, theosophy, socialism etc had been varied and multifarious whereas Gandhi had been a fighter for civil rights to a restricted community of his people in South Africa. Mrs. Besant had been from her very early days a writer, orator, journalist, preacher, educator, social reformer, etc whereas Gandhi's record in these fields has never been very impressive. Gandhi appeared to have been of a queer bent of mind which gave an impression of his being religious. The twin words of Truth and Non-violence was freely used by him and his men without their really meaning what they said or did. Mrs. Besant travelled all over India and very frequently to consult people and to seek the cooperation of people whereas Gandhi, though he did travel, never consulted people on his programmes or movements. It seems that he did things as prompted by his inner voice. His opponents described him as a crank and also as one with inclination to be showy and humbug.

It was unfortunate that Gandhi played his politics as a rival to an older person, twenty-two years elder to him, Mrs. Besant. Perhaps, some people create a rival for themselves to get their egoes boosted; otherwise, there was no reason for an obstinate attitude of Gandhi. Gandhi, in order to buld up his political strength, gathered some Muslims around him, made an extraneous subject like the Khilafat issue as his pet programme and let loose the slogan of Hindu-Muslim unity all over the country, and, by such desperate actions the unity that had existed among the Hindus and Muslims in Indian villages began to crack and finally within twenty years almost collapsed.

As already said, in order to counter-act Mrs. Besant's educational schemes, Gandhi, as though out of spite, opened his schools with his own anti-Western quixotic projects and curriculum and with his queer sense of bias for spinning wheel. Instead of mustering the support of the Hindu intellectuals, he gathered some Muslims to conduct his schools. For instance, the Jamia Millia Islamia had one and only Hindu to foster that, and that was Gandhi. In October 1920, he along with Maulana ~~Mah~~ Muhammad Ali, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and others started the institution with Muhammad Majeeb and Zakir Hussein, among others, as teachers. That was the time the Khilafat agitation had been taking place with Gandhi and Ali Brothers as leaders of that movement. Gandhi was then a much-wanted person by the Muslims. They invited him to the Aligarh Muslim University and other Muslim institutions. The Muslim nobles made use of Gandhi from the distant Khilafat issue to the Jamia Millia School classroom. They wanted Gandhi ~~from the distant Khilafat issue to the Jamia~~ only to support their own causes and other than that they did not want him. By the year 1930, most of those Muslims left him one by one and the only Muslim who was with Gandhi, Maulana Azad, did not seem to have had any good opinion of him, according to Azad's book- 'INDIA WINS FREEDOM'.

Whatever that may be, since Mrs. Besant was an ardent Hindu, worked for Hindus and

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roused the masses- both culturally and politically, Gandhi took Muslims to confidence. In fact, with his Khilafat politics at hand, most of the resolutions of his at the Congress sessions, were passed by the strength of the Muslim votes. When politics came to the level of just counting votes, that meant that there was rivalry, and Gandhi's rival was Mrs. Besant. Gandhi never followed anyone at any time in his life and now why should he follow this old lady? In fact, his mental make up and his way of thinking, as he himself has said, was not to follow but to lead, and that was his 'principle' over which he said that he wouldn't compromise.

It was well known that Gandhi's civil disobedience movements had fostered rowdism and disorder in the country. Mrs. Besant 'complained sarcastically that in spite of Gandhi's promise to go to the Himalayas if there were violence, he made no motion to go. He was seeing everything in terms of the Himalayas these days, she said. He was developing a Himalayan complex." 5.

Gandhi was clever in using words of the sort and together with that he became popular, because popularity itself is a commodity that is complex and obsolete in reality, especially in politics and in a crowded country like India. Amidst the noise- Gandhi-ki-Jai, all over India, Gandhi was up in building his image along with his 'Himalayan miscalculations'. He continued to say that in his opinion SWARAJ or self-Government was possible by 'October next' (1921). Mrs. Besant, of course, would openly ridicule all such utterances of Gandhi who had been publicising his non-violence, spinning wheel, Hindu-Muslim unity, removal of untouchability, banning of drugs and drinks etc, and with those laudable objectives he charmed the country which had over 85 per cent of 320 million people at that time quite illiterate, ignorant and poor. Amidst these people Gandhi was 'experimenting' all his pet schemes which in return only fostered violence, distrust, Hindu-Muslim DIS-unity and cynicism. Gandhi had then also a gift to quickly admit his weakness by saying that he was sitting on the top 'of the volcano' which he was trying 'to turn into hard incombustible rock'!

In spite of all this, Gandhi had firmly established as a national leader while those senior Hindu and Muslim leaders slowly withdrew one by one, but the adverse propaganda against the opponents of Gandhi or Gandhians, was made and then 74-year old Annie Besant became their worst victim because she was the main opponent of Gandhi, she was a Britisher, she was more devoted as a nationalist than others and she was internationally well known orator, writer, theosophist and humanist. None of those men or women in India of those days had been as resourceful as that old lady and it was obvious that most of their venomous and even vicious attack was aimed at her. They found that the other critics of Gandhi were of no consequence. Sir Edwin Montague had expressed in 1918 that if the Government had tried to silence her by satisfying her frustration, she would not have been such an ardent fighter for India's freedom. Till 1920, the British had feared Mrs. Besant and not any other Indian nationalists.

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5. Prof. Nethercot- on Annie Pages 330, 321 etc, Vol.II.

When Lord Reading had a talk with Mrs. Besant, Gandhi and Lajpat Rai, the Congress President, together, Gandhi kept on saying that 'solid ameliorative work' was the only way to SWARAJ. Later it so happened when Mrs. Besant had left India in I92I, Gandhi pushed ahead his campaign plans like burning of foreign cloth, boycotting the visit of the Prince of Wales, etc. These unwanted and unwarranted and, rather destructive or harmful programmes, by a man who talked about nonviolence, perhaps to get glorified by the boorish millions of the country, resulted in the ~~Malabar~~ Malabar riots in the south-west of India. A cartoon in Mrs. Besant's NEW INDIA showed Gandhi gazing at the far off Himalayas and then pondering as to what had happened. In the meantime, the Bombay Government decided to arrest all those Khilafat fanatics- the supporters of Gandhi, the Mapillas of West Coast and other Muslims. Poet R. Tagore bitterly attacked Gandhi's programmes.

On the Ist of October, the 75th birthday of Mrs. Besant, was celebrated with prayers, gifts, flowers and speeches, and Gandhi's 52nd birthday was celebrated on the 2nd October I92I, with HARTALs, riots, burning of foreign cloth and speeches. Amongst these two forms of birthday celebrations, one can detect, as Poet Tagore said, Gandhi's inner urge to 'destroy' and his own call to people saying that the British empire represented Satanism and that 'it was the duty of everyone to destroy it'.

Does it look like the words coming from the lips of man who was always talked about non-violence, and doesn't one see some sort of humbug here in the one who was saying one thing and doing another? Gandhi's words ~~were~~ are sprinkled with blood when he said that 'unless they apologise for committing such atrocities, it would certainly perish!' These are strong words which wouldn't, however, break anyone's bone. But what atrocities the British committed and who was the cause for that, Gandhi wouldn't say. All the same, it is very difficult to say if Gandhi was truly a man of nonviolence although one could say he had tried to be truthful as he had been professing all along! Well, be it so!

Now comes Gandhi with another stunt. As already said, Mrs. Besant had designed a flag for India when she was an internee in Ootacmund in I9I7, and now Gandhi found it necessary to have a flag of his choice with white, green and red, with the drawing of the spinning wheel in the middle. He used to say that India as a nation 'can live and die only for the spinning wheel'. This utterance too seems as absurd as his other programmes. Anyway when India became free, his devotees removed that spinning wheel and just put a wheel or Ashoka Chakra in the middle of the flag.

Thus Gandhi was on a 'deliberate search for symbols to suggest the kind of revolution he desired'. Flag, spinning wheel, home-spun cloth, white KHADI cap, burning of the foreign cloth etc were his symbols. Travelling in the third class train was his practice and that was to identify himself with the poor. In September I92I, he was in Madura, South India. The huge crowds used to be at every place he stopped to rest, relax or speak, and the cries of Gandhi-ki-Jai too were heard everywhere. That was a kind of mob hysteria and even now such things happen when some leaders succeed in hypnotising common people.

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Those few Brahmins of Madras like Satyamurti, Vijayaraghavachari, Rajagopalachari and others were ~~[illegible]~~ sitting on fences till 1920 and then suddenly came to the forefront. They had seen enough of Annie Besant in Adyar, Madras, all those years. Now she became old and almost withdrawn, and these local men, backed up by THE HINDU wanted a leader of their own race, colour, creed etc, and they found instead of that white old lady of Adyar one quiet and yet noisy Gujarati in the distant Gujarat. C.Rajagopalachari, then about 42 years old, was suddenly bitten by the bug of politics. He had, of course, had his own role to play as Gandhi's lieutenant, and like the Nehrus of the up North, he too was with Gandhi in spite of the fact that they had all differed from him.

By this time, Gandhi felt secure as a national leader and he took to loin cloth. One version of the reason for his loin-cloth politics, according to Robert Payne, was this: When people went on shouting Gandhi-ki-Jai at a meeting arranged for Gandhi in South India in 1922, Gandhi was enraged because he couldn't speak. Then instinctively, he announced that he would wear only a loincloth. Rajagopalachari was with Gandhi and he strenously objected, but Gandhi had determined to carry out his plan saying that there was nothing extraordinary in wearing a loincloth in Madras State of those times, where people went about half-naked. Gandhi proposed to limit the period of penance to about five weeks and then he would revert to his usual costume of long DHOTI, cap and shirt. If the weather became cold he would wear shawl over his bare chest.

In addition to his saying that he represented the poor man that way, Gandhi also announced that he was merely following the example of his Kathiawar kinsmen who went about bare-headed and bare-chested, and with minimum of clothes at a time of mourning. Thus, Gandhi's bare-chested symbol became a badge of honour, and that way he represented the poor peasants of the country.

Here one can be sure that shrewd old Annie, who had known her opponent and all his political stunts and antics so well, and also a good many Muslim and Hindu scholarly politicisns like Sastri, Tagore, Madan Mohan Malaviya, the Ali brothers, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and ever more cynics, must have had a hearty laugh at this kind of exhibitionism of Gandhi as a politician. Well, may it be so although those were sixty-year old stories.

The Prince of Wales, later Edward the VIII, visited India in the end of the year 1921. Mrs. Besant welcommed him through an editorial in her NEW INDIA. That was in consistent to her stand taken to support the Reforms of 1919 and other programmes in a constitutional way. But Gandhi organised a HARTAL in order to voice his protest, and as a result, in Bombay where the prince landed there were riots, burnings, stonings and deaths of some people. Shops were closed in many Indian cities and mob violence broke out. Liquor shops were smashed and motor and tram-cars were set on fire. Muslims too joined in the protest but Parsis, Jews, Eurasians, Christians and others joined in welcomming the Prince.

However, the violent turn of events were not unexpected. But then all the writers

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about the events of those days say that Gandhi was stunned at the violent outburst. Some said that Gandhi was shocked. But at this distance of the time, after sixty years, one can confidently say that Gandhi had expected that to happen, and that was why he called on the people for the mass protest against the Prince. He had experiences of that kind, of mobs and riots, and he was warned many a time about the consequences of his action, and there was nothing for him to get shocked. To recount again, the poet R.Rabindranath Tagore had rightly evaluated the situation when he said that there was something like 'a fierce joy in destruction' in Gandhi. Mrs. Besant too was not wrong when she commented on the deliberate set up of the mob to violence as 'brickbats should be met by bullets'. Right hon'ble Srinivasa Sastri characterised Gandhi's arguments as 'fantastic to a degree'. Many other elder citizens too had warned him many a time and, therefore, he knew what would happen, and there was nothing for him to get shocked as scores of his biographers have been saying these days.

But the minority of the intelligentia remained a minority all the time, while Gandhi was swept away by the support of the masses that the country had in plenty. There was a blind adoration for the man, and Gandhi lived up to it transforming himself stage by stage till he reached the loincloth stage. To add to that, Gandhi's slogan on the Hindu-Muslim unity and Truth and Non-violence helped to boost his stature.

As there was violence in many parts of India during the visit of the Prince of Wales, Government took prompt action to quell that. Many of the followers of Gandhi like Motilal Nehru of Allahabad, Bhagwan Das of Benares, Chittaranjan Das of Calcutta and several others were arrested 'to keep them out of further mischief'.

During this national turmoil, the role of Muslims deserved to be seen clearly. Gandhi, no doubt, had succeeded in filling the Congress organization with Muslims just because he had taken up the Caliphate issue which was dear to them. The Muslims offered their co-operation only to that extent, and they had nothing to do with Gandhi's slogan of Hindu-Muslim unity which they did not want. The Muslims would say that: 'Muslims first, and everything else afterwards'. 6.

Gandhi's politics with Muslims was frustrated from the very beginning. The Ali brothers and Maulana Azad were preaching in those times not the Hindu-Muslim unity but only the Muslim regeneration and progress. They said that: 7.

> "The Government of India had trampled the laws of Islam under foot, that India was therefore, a DAR-UL-HARB, and that it was the duty of the Muslims to leave for other countries in which the Islam held sway. In obedience to this call, many thousands of simple Muslims joined the HIJRIT (migration) movement, and took part in the exodus from India. In the north-western Province, thousands of families sold their land and property, and in August 1920, it is estimated that about 18,000 people moved to Afghanistan--------."

Gandhi helped Muslim leaders in encouraging Muslims to leave India. He went to Ali-

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6. Hafiz Malik- Muslim Nationalism in India & Pakistan.
7. " " " " " " (Pages 237 & 238)

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Aligarh University and exhorted the students to emigrate. "I invited the young men to be FAKIRs for the service of the Motherland", he said. 8.

As to the Khilafat movement of Gandhi that was combined into the freedom movement, Hafiz Malik wrote, that: 9.

> "Even if India were to gain freedom, what good it would be to the Turks? There is no doubt that the Caliphate movement was characterised by mental confusion, reckless enthusiasm and fantastic self-sacrifice. A tide of riot and disorder swept over the country culminating in a rising of the Maplahs--------In February 1922, Gandhi suspended SATYAGRAHA because of Chauri-Chaura incident--------The years that followed were marked by ever-growing tension between Hindus and Muslims---------Little confidence or love remained between the two nationalities---------The abolition of the institution of the Caliphate on the 1st November 1922, by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey put the leaders of the movement in a ridiculous position. Muslims became almost leaderless; they drifted aimless and rudderless on the high seas of Indian politics until the Thirties when they demanded the creation of Pakistan."

Therefore, these people who had their hearts and souls elsewhere were supported by Gandhi to play his own politics, and when violence broke out, as most of the writers say, the stunned Gandhi seemed to have been betrayed by his own supporters. He undertook a three-day hunger-strike without water to protest against the rioting. It was said, the distraught Gandhi was weeping,and then moaned, 'I am a bankrupt'. This kind of game of an avowed professional politician in loincloth seemed to have been just the pretensions to mislead his own men- let alone the entire country. Later Gandhi undertook to organise SEVAK DALs. All that he did, it was said, was dictated by his conscience and in the name of God. Amidst the national confusion of the time, the cry of Gandhi-ki-Jai kept Gandhi in good spirits and he didn't care for what others said. Robert Patne summarised the situation as under: 10.

> "What Gandhi saw was the failure of the non-violent non-cooperation movement, his incapacity to maintain discipline, the end of any immediate confrontation with the government, for, all the advantages were on the side of the British Raj and all the shame had fallen on himself. His two-day fast could not help to better the situation. Some thousands of Congressmen were arrested, when Gandhi began to speak more about self-suffering and non-violence. 'Fantasies of violence filled his mind. He saw himself being led out to execution".

Here Gandhi looked as though yearning to feel the taste of blood and destruction, and nothing less than that. His talk on 'self-suffering' seemed to have been just a hoax. Everyone knew that the British Government was very liberal and fed Gandhi and his men- who were all instigators of violent disorder all over the country, comfortably in jails. In fact, people had known even at that time that many impoverished Indians joined Gandhi calling themselves as nationalists and rushed to get themselves arrested. They were served with good food and could spend a relaxed life in gaols, and it was Gandhi who knew all this trick than anyone else. But he talked in a big way saying- God, Truth, non-violence and so on. But Gandhi didn't mean what he was saying could also be seen by the facts stated as under; 11.

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8. Gandhi- 'My Experiments with Truth'.
9. Hafeez Malik- Muslim Nationalism in India & Pakistan,
10. Robert Payne on Gandhi- Page 353, 355 & 357.

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"In Surat he declared in a speech that the best hope lay in another Amritasar, and by this Gandhi has meant that he desired to see another bloodbath taking place on the scale of what had happened at Jalianwalla Bagh." He would also say that:

> "Let some General Dyer stand before us with his troops. Let him start firing without warning us--------We have lost our faith in ourselves and in mankind."

It seemed that Gandhi was fooling his poor people with that kind of talk. He knew what he was doing was contrary to what the elders had told him and yet, rather stubbornly, clung to his ways. He was in thirst of blood when he said 'another Amritasar', 'some General Dyer' and so on. It was difficult to understand why the British left those people to freely indulge to create such mob scenes with loot, arson and disorder in the name of HARTAL, SATYAGRAHA and so on.

Gandhi launched another civil disobedience movement in a village of Bardoli, ~~Surat~~ Gujarat, of about 87,000 people. That was, he said, to rescue the birthright of the people, freedom of speech, freedom of press etc. Gandhi also included other grievances of his like the Khilafat, the Punjab massacre and the issue of Swaraj. Vittalabhai J. Patel was made the leader of the Bardoli movement. Gandhi said: II.

> "The Government declare in clear terms a policy of absolute non-interference with all the non-violent activities in the country whether they be regarding the redress of the Khilafat, the Punjab wrongs or the SWARAJ."

Thus Gandhi was demanding, Robert Payne said, 'immunity for any audacious act by himself or by the Congress party, the abject surrender of the Government, and the immediate recognition of himself as the leader of the movement capable of taking the Government's place. Anyway the Government rejected this sort of "ultimatum which had little sense even at that time.

The consequence of the ultimatum to the Viceroy stating that he (Gandhi) had proposed to lead a vast civil disobedience movement in Bardoli unless his demands were met in seven days, was that it gave an impression of one drawing up a legal petition rather than a threat. Gandhi's demands were to concede full provincial autonomy and to discuss the problem arising from the transfer of such diarchical powers. These things were decided at the Congress session held in December 1921, where most of the members wore Gandhi caps and KHADI dress woven on their own wheels. Large photographs of him and of his main followers were displayed, and usual slogans like Gandhi-ki-Jai, Bharat-Mataki-Jai filled the air. Gandhi argued very lucidly to get himself appointed the sole authority of the Congress, and thus became, in fact, a virtual dictator.

Gandhi wrote a number of articles and letters, and those were considered seditious. One-time admirer of the British, Gandhi, now stood uncompromising in his views. Lord Reading asked him in return, that:

> "What purpose is served by flagrant breaches of the law for the purpose of challenging the Government, and in order to compel arrest?"

Gandhi replied, that:

II. Robert Payne on Gandhi- Page 357.

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"We seek arrest because this so called freedom is slavery. We are challenging the might of this Government because we consider its activity to be wholly evil. We want to overthrow the Government. We want to compel its submission to the people's will. We desire to show that the Government exists to serve the people and not people the Government--------."

All this was nothing new. Many other fighters for freedom before Gandhi have told the same thing, but here Gandhi came out as a revolutionary, a desperate revolutionary, forgetting all the non-violent precepts which he had been saying. Gandhi wrote very many strongly worded letters, and Government promptly considered them as highly seditious. Gandhi admitted that he was "aware that he had written strongly".

As a result of Gandhi's three main inflammatory articles, he was arrested on the I0th March I922. His trial took place on the I8th March before the Judge Robert Bloomfield. As he entered the court, he bowed to the prisoner and the latter too did the same in return. The judge asked the prisoner, 'What's your name?'and then asked, 'What's your occupation?'. Gandhi replied, 'Farmer and weaver'. This matter of fact reply was received by everyone in the court with justified surprise and jubiliation, and those three words of an august prisoner vibrated all over the country together with the shoutings of 'Gandhi-ki-Jai. To become a political prisoner was a great honour in those days and the country held all such prisoners as great saviours and patriots all though a good lot of them were just time-servers and opportunists. Tilak in I897, Mrs. Besant in I9I7, Muhammad Ali in I9I9 and Gandhi in I922, were the great political prisoners. All these had different political reasons to get themselves jailed and among them Tilak was a Hindu extremist and Muhammad Ali was a Muslim bigot and a main spokesman of the far-away Khilafat movement.

Judge Bloomfield, 'a mild mannered dignitary' said in the court that he was 'perfectly aware that he was dealing with a man of high ideals and of noble and even saintly life', but that was his duty to administer the law which was no respector of saints. Gandhi, of course, had many things to say in reply and his words rang over the British Government very loudly. He had once written that:

"No empire intoxicated with the red wine of power and plunder of weaker races has yet lived long in the world, and this British empire, which is based upon organised exploitation of physically weaker races of the earth and upon a continuous exhibition of brute force, cannot live if there is a just God ruling over the universe-------."

In the court Gandhi pleaded guilty of all the charges. The prosecutor had mentioned that Gandhi's complicity in the crimes committed in Bombay, Madras, Chauri-Chaura and elsewhere. Gandhi justified his actions and said that:

"I wish to endorse all the blame which the learned advocate-general has thrown on my shoulders--------I should have known the consequences of everyone of my acts. I knew that I was playing with fire-------I want to avoid violence. Non-violence is the first article of my faith. It is also the last article of my creed. But I had to make my choice--------I know that my people have sometimes gone mad. I am deeply sorry for it, and I am, therefore, have to submit not to a light penalty but to the highest penalty. I do not ask for mercy--------The only course open to you, the judge, is, as I am just going to say in my statement, either to resign your post, or inflict on

on me the severest penalty, if you believe that the system and the law you are assisting to administer are good for the people-------."

Gandhi also gave his personal reasons to become a staunch fighter against the British. He said, that:

"My public life began in I893 in South Africa in troubled weather. My first contact with the British authority in that country was not of a happy character------More correctly I discovered that I had no rights as a man because I was an Indian."

"But I was not baffled", Gandhi added!

These are spirited words, all right. Those were all right only for those days when the country was witnessing a sort nationalistic alertness, but the question was how far Gandhi was sincere in all that he muttered. He admitted his guilt and then dictated to the judge 'to inflict on him the severest penalty'. This could be said as an invitation to self-suffering. He said that he 'should have known the consequences', but the fact was that he had already known all about that and he was also warned of what would happen, and yet Gandhi took delight in seeing blood flow.

Furthermore, he recalled his South African days and there too he invited trouble to himself by his obstinacy, and all that bundled up frustration of not less than ~~thirty~~ twenty years came to India in the form of Mohandas Gandhi, but it was difficult to say that he fought against the British. It looked that he fought against his own frustration and against his very intimate rivals and that was all one could make out if one went through the speeches and writings of Gandhi, which seemed to have been different from his motives or intentions and actions. It seemed that politicians make use of the courts of law to propagate their political views. In a long statement, Gandhi said that:

"The British Government has done more harm to India than any previous system. India is less manly under the British rule than she ever was before. Holding such belief, I consider it to be a sin to have affection for the system."

This was far from Truth. This was Gandhi's double-edged truth. If British had done 'more harm than any other previous system', which was that 'previous system' that this old ~~xxxkk~~ crank referred to? Was it the system of Aurabzib, Nadir Shah, Nizam Shah, Babar Shah, Timur or which other blood-thirsty tyrant's system this loin-clother SATYAGRAHI liked? Would they have spared his bald head if he had uttered such nonsense in their courts or would they have at least allowed him to play all such mock politics that he calculatedly played in the country right from I9I5?

However, as already said, Gandhi was debunking the country after making full use of the British leniency and liberalism. In that way the British fed Gandhi to flourish as a crank. The British system of education that they fostered in the country right from I835 was to produce some civilized and manly people in the country and now they were happy that from the Inner Temple they modelled a lawyer politician to display the kind of 'manliness' that Gandhi was referring to. Gandhi was here seen with all his inconsistencies, for which his opponents accused him. It was cheap politics that he played when he abused the British in the court after supporting them and praising them several times, perhaps, just to play his opportunistic politics.

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Gandhi was trying to be a martyr by his denouncement of British system in India. His holding on to the idea that 'only extreme non-violence, the absolute abstention of violence, would bring about the British rule', had neither sense nor practical value at all. But the slogan Gandhi-ki-Jai was played all the time and that sounded as a background music for Gandhi, and that was all about it.

Judge Bloomfield summed up the case against Gandhi and said that Gandhi had made his task easy by pleading guilty to the charges. He added that Gandhi had preached against violence, but,he said, it could not be forgotten that he had preached sedition and must be punished. A British judge had sentenced Bal Gangadhar Tilak to six years imprisonment, it was recalled, and here the judge Bloomfield, in his most gentlemanner told Gandhi, that:

> "It would be impossible to ignore the fact that in the eyes of millions of your countrymen, you are a great patriot and a great leader. Even those who differ from you in politics look upon you as a man of high ideals and of noble and even of saintly life.....You will not consider it unreasonable, I think, that you should be classed with Mr. Tilak."

Gandhi replied that he would regard that 'as the proudest privilege and honour' to be associated with Lokmanya's (Tilak) name.' When he was sentenced for six-year's imprisonment, he said, 'so far as the sentence itself is concerned, I certainly consider that it is as light as any judge would inflict on me.'

As the judge left the bench, he bowed once more to the prisoner who bowed in return. The trial which lasted about I00 minutes, was over. Gandhi was transferred from the Sabramati jail to Yeravada. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu who was present at the trial described it as 'the most epic event of modern times', but Sarojini like her other associates was a defector from Mrs. Besant's group. She was also a poetess who could describe any scene or any event suiting to the occasion. But then here is a peroration of a churchman, Rev. H. Holmes who poured out words this way:

> "Gandhi holds absolutely in his hands today the destinies of his people. When Gandhi speaks it is India that speaks. When Gandhi acts, it is India that acts. When Gandhi is arrested, it is India that is outraged and humiliated. More truly, I believe, than any other man, who has ever lived, this great Indian is the incarnation of a people's soul."

What happened during those tense months, was all Gandhian. The Chouri-Chaura incident of February I922, was an episode that took Gandhi's SATYAGRAHA movement into a shocking turn, when in a remote village of Uttar Pradesh, police fired an unarmed crowd who retaliated by burning down police station. Twenty-two policemen were killed, and Gandhi withdrew his civil disobedience movement as he found it dangerous to proceed with that further.

Mrs. Besant, in the meantime, would not keep quiet. She led a delegation of I6 members to bring up some settlement between Government and Congress, but that was not successful. When there was violence in many parts of the country, Gandhi would simply confess his failure and disappointment, but Mrs. Besant would bombard through her NEW INDIA why Gandhi could still not realise his 'Himalayan blunder'. She wrote to Gandhi praising him as of the stuff 'of which Christs are made' and then warned him of the probable effects

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on the masses of trying to put SWARAJ too fast.

Gandhi's 'Swaraj within a year' slogan too was frustrated. About 30,000 people were in the Indian prisons and most of them were law-breakers. Jawaharlal, the master opportunist and defector from Annie Besant's group, also dabbled in politics as a follower of Gandhi and alongside his father. "I did not give an absolute allegiance to the doctrine of non-violence or accept it for ever", he wrote later on. In those days nationalists were made over-night with just a white 'Gandhi-cap' on their heads. The old Congress organization disappeared and the new Congress had just centred around Gandhi. Amidst that acrimonious scenes of freedom movement, there was no place for ethics or reason but there was no dearth for sycophants and hero-worshippers in the country where Gandhi was idolised, and a kind of personality cult developed around him.

These kinds of 'cults' develop even today wherever there is power and money. The country saw that happening that way in 1975-77, so there was no wonder if Gandhi could succeed in drawing towards him those millions. His loin cloth politics certainly raised him up in the estimation of his people but now is the time to pause what really this 'Mahatma', the 'conjuror' or the 'saint' did as the masses 'literally worshipped him'. Was he in such a need to the country when SWARAJ came a quarter century later as a result of some extraneous causes during the second World War?

From one programme to another, Gandhi was found exploiting the British liberalism, and he knew that too well, though not the people. He would not listen to anyone and yet carry on his bloody SATYAGRAHA in the name of AHIMSA. He would say that his 'inner voice' prompted him to carry on things but his opponents would scoff. Sometimes Gandhi would write strongly worded letters to the Government of India, and for instance, here is one in which he simply spilt blood. Perhaps, he would take pleasure from that sort of writing using words like 'aggressive civil disobedience'. He wrote that:

> "If you can see your way to make the necessary declaration within seven days——— I shall be prepared to advice postponement of civil disobedience of an aggressive character till the imprisoned workers have, after their discharge reviewed the whole situation and considered it de Novo———Aggressive C.D.———will be taken upon only when the Government departs from its policy of strictest neutrality or refuses to yield to the clearly expressed opinion of the vast majority of the people of India."

Anyway within this seven days' ultimatum, the Chauri Chaura incident took place. It seemed that the British enjoyed having a Gandhi in India those days because Gandhi's Hindu-Muslim politics, periodical SATYAGRAHA agitations etc, they found, were divisive in nature, and, therefore, they left the old man to carry on things in the way he was doing. The British must have also found Gandhian antics favourable to them; otherwise, no sane Government would have allowed men like this to get away after creating tensions in the way Gandhi tried to create, as Tagore said, with 'a fierce joy of annhilation', when especially in the India of those days there "were more important things to fight for"!

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CHAPTER XIII.

MRS. BESANT'S COMMONWEALTH OF INDIA BILL.

The intensity of Gandhi's SATYAGRAHA movement was much felt in India in 1922, but he had been working on it from 1917 itself with his campaigns in Champaran, Kheda, Bardoli and other places. In January 1920, he appeared before the Disorders Inquiry Committee at Ahmedabad when the chairman of the Committee, Lord Hunter, asked him that: "I take it Mr. Gandhi that you are the author of SATYAGRAHA movement."

'Yes, Sir,' said Gandhi.

'Will you explain it briefly?' asked Lord Hunter.

'It is a movement', said Gandhi, 'intended to replace methods of violence, and a movement based entirely upon truth. It is, as I have conceived it, an extension of the domestic law in the political field and my experience has led me to the conclusion that that movement and that alone can rid India of the possibility of violence spreading throughout the length and breadth of the land for the redress of grievances--------."

This was a new innovation in the country when the older leaders of the Congress found it difficult to swallow. But a mass upsurge was seen along with the shoutings of Gandhi-ki-jai renting the air and from December 1919 to 1923 was a period when Gandhi pushed his way up and people thought that Gandhi would bring SWARAJ very soon within six months or eight months or ten months, and that was the hope that Gandhi himself had bestowed on the people while he was consolidating his hold over the masses. But till the end of the year 1921, the SWARAJ that Gandhi said that it would come, was not in sight, and his Muslim colleague Muhammad Ali had left for Europe on some Khilafat deputation. Annie Besant was watching all this fun and once commented humorously, that:

"SWARAJ was to arrive on September 30, or October 1. on October 31 or on December 31, at the Congress; it is as far off as ever."

But Gandhi replied, that:

"I am unable to accept any blame for having set the time limit. I would have been wrong not to do so, knowing as I did that if the people fulfilled the conditions which were capable of easy fulfilment, SWARAJ was certainly inside of twelve months. The time limit was not fixed in order to rouse the teaming millions, but it was fixed in order to rivet the attention of Congressmen and Congress-women on their sense of immediate duty and on the grand consequence of its fulfilment--------."

But this explanation of Gandhi was not convincing, because the country knew that he said all about his SWARAJ exactly 'to rouse the teaming millions' in order to publicise himself that he was a better prophet than most of those street prophets of Delhi. Gandhi' words did not tally with his views and work. He was trying to philosophise his ways as well as politics. Mrs. Besant, in the meantime, like Lokamanya Tilak, would say that people who talk philosophy need not be in politics. Their place is elsewhere, and she rightly concluded that Gandhi's trying to play politics with a show of religion was just a way that would eventually end in failure. That was exactly what happened and that was what many of his opponents including the poet Tagore and V.S.S.Sastri had expressed in much stronger terms. Gandhi, however, would say that: I.

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1. G.D.Tendulkar on Gandhi, Vol. II, Page 280.

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"I do want growth, I do want self-determination, I do want freedom, but I want all these for the soul. I doubt if the steel age is an advance upon the flint age. I am indifferent. It is the evolution of the soul to which the intellect and all our faculties have to be devoted--------."

An active politician talking in these terms was viewed with scepticism by the thinkers of the time. Those who were courageous enough openly attacked such ideas of Gandhi, and most others slipped away from him. But Gandhi had by then a good number of opportunistic politicians and poor, illiterate and ignorant common people to back him up and to ~~xxx~~ shout JAI to him. They hailed him as their leader. That was a time when even Mrs. Besant had started to spin in a jovial mood and in the presence of Gandhi, but she gave it up. She was not a hypocrite but a realist; not a dreamer but a worker. She was a woman of religion and also a politician but she would not mince matters. A politician could be religious as herself was, but the worldly politics could not be mixed up with heavenly religion, and if one did mix them up, that would be sheer hypocrisy. That was what many people had then felt. Politics is always crude, dishonest and opportunistic whereas religion, as everyone knew, was a thing of higher values.

In 1922, Mrs. Besant had been on an Australian trip and returned to India in June that year. With Gandhi and the rest of the Indian leaders in jail, she had nothing spectacular to offer. Moreover, by that time she had almost retirad from politics although she was active as ever as a journalist, speaker and above all, as the President of the International Theosophical Society. However, as far as politics was concerned, her thinking was far more methodical and progressive than that of the Congressmen of the Nineteen-twenties. She worked upon a valid and significant new plan, calling it: 'Forward to Home Rule- Appeal to Constitutional Parties'. This was the beginning of her 'Commonwealth of India Bill'.

She discussed with her friends and colleagues about her new plan. In Bombay she talked to a crowded gathering who listened to her attentively for over an hour. They gave her a friendly applause though many had treated her at the time of the non-cooperation movement unfavourably. At that time, however, the whole country was not behind Gandhi. There were many enlightened people who had appreciated the stand taken by Mrs. Besant, and many selfless politicians and observers were still her supporters. When she published her new plan, the press did not seem to have welcommed the idea ~~at~~ but most of the moderates and liberals favoured her points of view. A few extremists opposed it. She sent the circular to 3,000 bodies explaing the merits of her plan which was called by some people as 'Mrs. Besant Plan'. She toured all over the country canvassing support for her and indeed, she did turn out a splendid work. In 1922-23, several people and organizations in the country sent her adolatory addresses and scrolls thanking her services to the Motherland.

Mrs. Besant was glad to know in September 1922 that both the houses of Legislative Assembly at Simla, were supporting her scheme for Home Rule. In October that year she

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gathered more support. In January 1923, when the Home Rule conference met, she herself would not be a candidate for its presidency because situation called for an Indian to hold such positions. She regarded herself as only the convening secretary. Later when she went to Trivandrum, there was a conspiracy against her of 'a small knot of young men' who tried in vain to break up a meeting at the Law College by shouting 'Mahatma Gandhi-ki-Jai' and used fire crackers, whistling, hissing and stoning against her. But such things were confined largely to students who knew very little of her and her past services and sacrifices for the country.

Motilal Nehru and Chittaranjan Das, the latter a President of the Gaya session of the Congress, found it advisable to enter the provincial councils under the 1919 Reforms. They had abandoned the idea earlier under Gandhi's influence. This idea of Nehru and Das lent further encouragement to the hopes of Mrs. Besant. But C. Rajagopalachari was for complete abstention from the provincial councils as he was a fierce opponent of everything that was British in those days. Mrs. Besant, in the meantime, held a meeting in Delhi in February 1923, with 150 delegates, where they came to certain terms after two days of deliberation. They also elected a deputation to be sent to England to present their case as out-lined in the Mrs. Besant Plan, to the members of the Parliament.

Mrs. Besant stood aloof from all this saying that she was of 'white skin', and let others do the job. The deputation that left for London took her plan with them, and that was taken up by the Home Rule branch and the British Indian union, with Edwin Montague in the chair. In India, in the meantime, many Indians agreed to run on her platform and held a national convention to frame a Commonwealth of India Bill. But her optimism about the election suffered a rude shock. Most of her candidates were defeated, and they included Jamnadas Dwarakadas. Vittalbhai Patel, 'the most quarrelsome and abusive person', Bombay could find, saw to their defeat. The Swarajists succeeded. 2.

Some time later in 1923, Sir Edwin Montague resigned, and his place was taken by Sir Sydney Olivier, an old friend of Mrs. Besant of her Fabian days. With that her hopes enhanced, and it enhanced further because her Commonwealth of India Bill was favoured by the new prime minister Ramsay Mcdonald who succeeded Stanley Baldwin.

In the meantime, back in India on the 5th February 1924, Gandhi was freed from jail on medical advice, but the Conservatives in England were not pleased with the move. The MORNING POST warned that the Government was 'playing with fire'. Gandhi himself was disappointed over being released for reasons of health, and sooner than expected. He had a serious attack of appendicities in January 1924. Gandhi was operated in gaol of Poona 'where against all his principles he allowed himself to be operated upon by an English surgeon, one Col. Maddock, successfully.'

> "What had happened to Gandhi, his devout followers wondered, that he should have given way to Western medical science, when he had urged so many others to be cured by fasting and will power? What had happened to his control of mind over the body? What had happened to his faith in religion————Was he after all just another man?" 3.

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2. Prof. Nethercot on Annie, Vol. II. 3. D.F. Karaka – "Out of Dust"!

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Yes, he was after all just another man. How can the illiterate and superstitious millions of the country know that Gandhi was after all a man and not a god? Gandhi however, knew and so also his close associates, who he was, after all! He said, that:

> "I plead guilty. Unfortunately for me I am far from perfect. I am simply a humble aspirant for perfection--------As I hold that my illness was a result of infirmity of thought or mind, so do I~~/~~ concede that my submission to the surgical operation was an additional infirmity of the mind. If I was absolutely free from egoism, I would have resigned myself to the inevitable, but I wanted to live in the present body--------."

In utterances such as this, Gandhi gave an idea to the people that he was philosophic and religious. Everytime he failed, he would quickly plead guilty. Seldom people do so unless they are forced to. Anyway Gandhi's political opponents as well as the distant onlookers would look at him in another way and so also Mrs. Besant who would never agree with all that Gandhi was saying. She knew him well and so also Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Some close associates of Gandhi too knew Gandhi was just another man of a queer make up but they did not come out openly telling all that because they knew that if they offend Gandhi they would lose their importance as CHOTA leaders of the country.

After the operation and the release from the gaol, Gandhi came to the little Juhu beach near Bombay, where he rested. Mahdev Desai, his trusted friend and secretary, was with him. It was there, amidst those beautiful surroundings, Chittaranjan Das and Motilal Nehru came to see ~~him~~ Gandhi although they had once differed from him. Aware as they were of the success of the Swarajist movement, a sense of loyalty to Gandhi made them to go to him to see if they could change him to their way of thinking.

And, their way of thinking was nothing extraordinary. They thought that the salvation of the country depended on the attainment of complete self-Government. Thus, the new way of thinking was in complete contrast of those thinkings of those scholar-thinkers and reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy, Mahdev Govinda Ranade, Firozshah Mehta, Gopalakrishna Gokhale and several others, who found the salvation of the country by its being ruled by the Britain and Britain alone till the old social, economic, political, and cultural malais were completely wiped out of the country.

But when India was still poor, superstitious and hopelessly caste-ridden and economically had yet to go a long way, what kind of salvation that these suddenly emerged 'gods' like Gandhi, Das and elder Nehru, were promising to Indian people? It was too difficult to say even in those days if those men who had raised Gandhi to a stature he had enjoyed, were all unselfish even though they showed themselves in their new garbs and garments on every alternate day and in the name of patriotism! But then the thing that those men enjoyed was the cries of millions of poor impoverished people of India, and that was merely a desperate ~~cry~~ full-throated shoutings that- Gandhi-ki-jai, Das-ki-jai, Nehru-ki-jai, Patel-ki-jai and everyone else-ki-jai! Together with that those so called leaders were able to get some publicity through the press and press photographs. The roadside merchants would make some money selling all their printed photographs.

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These two men, Chittaranjan Das and Motilal Nehru, were keen on participating in the legislative assemblies of the country, and they were called Swarajists. Gandhi and his followers were called the 'no-changers', and that meant they were against the 'Council-entry' proposals. There is another thing to be noted here. Those people who went to Gandhi for inspiration were those who did not agree with Mrs. Besant whereas some Swarajists like Madan Mohan Malaviya and Muhammad Ali Jinnah had still relied on her. In the meeting where they decided to send a deputation to England to canvass support to her Bill, they elected Tej Bahadur Sapru, as President, Srinivasa Sastri as vice-President, Mrs. Besant herself as Secretary and four others as members. The NEW INDIA said that:

> "India's case will be ready in the autumn. The National convention will have drawn up her Magna Carta, and Britain, with an already friendly Government and a people inspired to do their duty by three of the Commonwealth's great citizens, will gladly welcome the great Nation in the world into free and equal partnership."

THE TIMES, London, praised the efforts of Mrs. Besant and her 'dynamic energy-------- which had kept the movement alive'. The Indian papers also had kind words for her, so also the papers in England. The DAILY HERALD and the DAILY NEWS called her 'probably the best woman speaker in the Empire'. THE EVENING STANDARD also agreed. Mrs. Besant was also familiar in all parts of Europe through her Theosophical Society of which she was the International president. At a meeting held in Queen's Hall, London, all her life-long services were eulogised by her friends, both the English and the Indian. Srinivasa Sastri garlanded her, and the prime minister Ramsay Macdonald, Lord Chancellor, the Chancellor of Exchequer, Sir Robert Baden-Powell and many others sent greetings. There were many offerings of flowers. This was in 23rd July 1924. G. Bernard Shaw also poured his tributes to her. Back home in India in the cities of Madras, Ahmedabad, Coimbatore, Poona and other places people gathered to praise her services to the country. Her NEW INDIA got out a special issue. Motilal Nehru sent a telegram, that:

> "Though I follow her no longer, I admire her still--------Her name will go down in history as one of the greatest Nation-builders in India."

Mohandas Gandhi wired, that:

> "I wish to express my deep admiration for this long record of service and the amazing energy and courage that lay behind it. I cannot forget, though it is many years ago, the inspiration I drew from her in my boyhood and then again in my experiences of political activity."

This was on the occasion of her fifty years completion of her public work on the 25th July 1924, beginning from 1874.

As Annie Besant returned home with the members of her delegation, the Indian newspapers wrote that her mission was a failure. But the NEW INDIA would not agree. It said that her Commonwealth of India Bill would go to Parliament in the following year-1925. V.S.Srinivasa Sastri arrived first in Bombay and declared his surprise and gratification over the sympathy and welcome Mrs. Besant had received everywhere in England. When she reached Madras, she was overwhelmed with garlands, meetings, addresses, etc from 'Your loving and dutiful children', 'Your humble and loyal children','Your sons and daughters of the Motherland,' etc etc.

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What happened among the trio- Gandhi, Das and Nehru, at the Juhu beach? Gandhi as a diplomat, worked on a simple compromise. 'Khaddar or Khadi and national schools are enough to occupy every available worker who believes in quiet, honest and undemonstrative work', he said. So the great move to become members of the central or provincial councils and fight from within, did not arise as far as Gandhi was concerned, but Chitharanjan Das and Motilal Nehru remained 'unconvinced by his reasoning'.

During this time the politics among the Indian leaders had some 'uneasy peace'. The battle among Gandhi, Das and Nehru had dwindled, and the mood of the Swarajists and the no-changers, was yet here for a compromise. 'But Das and Nehru wondered if the 370 millions of the country would find their salvation in the message of Gandhi. It was too early to tell', they concluded. D.F.Karaka wrote that:

> "The year had not progressed very far when, as a result of unrest, communal riots broke out all over India. The brunt of the rioting fell on Kohat, which was strangely a military post on the North-West Frontier. There were riots in other places too: The dead and wounded at Kohat totalled 4,000.
>
> "Disturbed by the outbreak of these communal riots, Gandhi decided to fast for twenty-one days. It was to be a penance because he felt he was to blame for this outbreak of violence. He had created in India a spirit of restlessness without first having educated the people sufficiently to observe non-violence."

'Disturbed by the outbreak of these communal riots, Gandhi decided to fast for twenty-one days'. He was ill and just operated on, and here he seemed to have been very strange. For the communal riots in the country he fasted as a penance and he was explaining away all that with his queer theories like purification of soul and so on. He said that it was like 'feeding of the soul at a time when the body was denied food'.

Some people think that they are larger than life and much larger than the country. They demonstrate their self-importance by such coercive tactics of fasting and then compelling others to consider them as such. Cranks in the garb of saints do such things even today, and Gandhi did all that sixty-five years back.

As a shrewd politician, Gandhi was confusing the national issues with his fasts, unwarranted HARTALs and uncalled for SATYAGRAHAs, and colouring all that with the twin-words- SATYA and AHIMSA. These words and phrases were enough to fill the minds and bellies of poor millions, and Gandhi knew that too very well. Gandhi made use of his loincloth personality as a fighter for freedom; he coerced the Government by his tactics, compelled his associates to follow him and caused his opponents and the intelligentia of the country to look at him with justified scepticism and cynicism. Gandhi's fast of September 1924 was one of his such feats. Most of the riots that took place were due to the tensions between Hindus and Muslims. Gandhi's friendship with the Muslims did not help him nor the country. The Muslims wanted Gandhi to work for them and they did not want to be with him for nothing. Gandhi knew that but he did not openly say that.

Gandhi's fast of September 1924, described by his cronies as 'epic fast', over, he rested for some time, and then went round touring some parts of the country. It was

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was said that in Benares when Gandhi visited the railway station was jammed, but only three years before that in I92I, during his visit, it was practically deserted'. So during those three years, Gandhi achieved some outstanding publicity stunts of national value. His Khilafat agitation, a couple of civil disobedience movements, his famous trial of I922 and arrest, his operation and then again his fast- all these created all India news and country knew him as a man who too could be arrested, could be operated on, could also fast, etc etc. When he was recouping his health in Bombay, Mrs. Besant arranged a series of talks with him, but how far they agreed to each other's suggestions was not clear!

Gandhi presided over the Belgaum sessions of the Indian National Congress in I924. When the conference was in progress, Mrs. Besant with Benegal Shiva Rao and J. Dwarakadas and others, entered the farther end of the huge pendal. Gandhi who was in his presidential seat, spotted her and promptly stood up to welcome her. The audience followed his example, and cried 'Gandhi-ki-jai' and not 'Mrs. Besant-ki-jai'. Those people must have thought that such slogans were applicable only to Indian Mahatmas and semi-Mahatmas and for foreigners. Anyway, Annie walked quickly to the dais and took her place among the ex-Presidents of the Congress.

Gandhi stopped the proceedings as she sent a chit to talk. He asked the audience to give her a respectful hearing, and congratulated 'the illustrious lady on having graced the occasion'. A London news magazine said on the occasion that:

> "Gandhi's only rival in India is a woman- perhaps the most remarkable of living women--------the greatest woman orator now living; this lady of the leonine mien and loving heart is, apart from Gandhi, probably the greatest cementer of Empire within the confines of India."

After finishing her short speech that she delivered with a purpose of throwing some suggestions, Mrs. Besant started to leave the pendal, when Gandhi thanked her for the speech for which she travelled all the way from Madras. Later she left to catch the train, and that was her last meeting with Congress, and also the last time she came before any important gathering in India.

Here it should also be said that this 'illustrious lady' first appeared before the Indian National Congress in I894, the very next year after her coming to Madras. From I894 to I924, a long impressive period of thirty years had been the time of multifarious activities of Mrs. Besant in India. Beginning from Theosophy, she surveyed such difficult and thorny fields of ancient Indian classics, epics, scriptures etc as a devout Hindu. Her zealous work in social and educational fields had been remarkable, and her service to the emergence of the Indian women and the depressed class of people was all too impressive and unforgettable. Finally from the year I9I4 to I924, when she last appeared before the Congress at Belgaum, Karnataka, for ten years she enlivened the Indian public life and the Indian freedom movement had one dominating and stormy personality in Mrs. Annie Besant.

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After that, however, Mrs. Besant was going about as only a senior leader, and the fact was that she was already past 75. She took part in various political meetings. For instance, at the Unity Conference of September 1924, which took place to consider about the Hindu-Muslim riots, she was one of the active participants along with Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Swami Shradhananda, Charles F. Andrews and others. Her only active political programme was in respect of her Commonwealth of India Bill which was already before the Parliament. Gandhi's presidential speech in Belgaum Congress gave some hints on the working of his mind. He said, that:

> "The most important boycott was the boycott of violence--------Non-violent non-cooperation had given to the people a consciousness of their strength--------We are faced with a situation that compels us to cry halt. For whilst the individuals hold firmly to their belief in non-cooperation, the majority of those who are immediately concerned, have lost faith in it, with the exception of boycott of foreign cloth. Scores of lawyers have resumed practice. Some even regret having ever given it up. Many who had given up councils have returned to them and the number of those who believe in council-entry is on the increase. Hundreds of boys and girls who gave up government schools and colleges have repented of their action and have returned to them.
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> "In these circumstances', continued Gandhi, after listing the failures of his own movements, "the boycotts cannot be worked as part of the national programme, unless the Congress is prepared to do without the classes directly affected--------We must tolerate each other and trust to time to convert the one or the other to the opposite belief. We must plead with the Liberals and others who have seceded, to rejoin the Congress."

Gandhi's confession of failures was best seen when he referred to his fancy programme of Hindu-Muslim unity, which did not yield anything but chaos and distrust among Hindus and Muslims. A Gandhian biographer said, that: 4.

> Now that the Khilafat question had no longer existed, the followers of the Islam too, preferred to return to their own communal camp rather than follow the banner of essentially Hindu leader who had retreated."

It was therefore clear that Gandhi had wavered and retreated from his noisy Khilafat programme in which Muslims themselves seemed to have had no faith. His talk on Hindu-Muslim unity served only as 'food' for the newspapers and publicity media. People joined his movements sheer out of emotion, and those school and college students, civil servants and others were hopelessly misguided by the old crank, and later when they found that they were misled they repented and returned to their education and their respective occupations. In the meantime, the careers of some thousands of young men were unnecessarily ruined.

When Gandhi had first issued a manifesto advocating non-cooperation, it was B.G. Tilak who had opposed him strongly, and that was in early 1920, and later on Gandhi behaved himself as a 'supreme commander', but to win his point on his pretentious projects he was helped by his coteries like Chittaranjan Das, Motilal Nehru and others, most of whom were just easy-chair politicians till 1917 when Annie Besant had stormed the country with her Home Rule agitations. Anyway Gandhi would not get a majority for his motions in the Congress Committee meetings, and to get a majority support they had to bring some

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4. D.F.Karaka- on Gandhi (Out of Dust).

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people, as already said, from the streets and make them raise their hands and thus get resolutions passed. Col. Wedgewood, a well known sympathiser with Indian aspirations, begged the Congress not to adopt a policy of non-cooperation which would alienate their friends in England. But then Gandhi went ahead, and he had the mob shouting at every street corner, Gandhi-ki-jai', and that was more than enough to get going.

Gandhi's nonviolent non-cooperation- both these terms- were misleading terms because they would never go together in action even if a mob of one-thousand Gandhis, all men exactly like Gandhi, try to work that out in the streets. Because, Mohandas Gandhi should have known that a Gandhi in his ASHRAM is different from a Gandhi in the street and amidst huge crowds. Anyway Gandhi's obstinate 'non-violent non-cooperation' always ended in violence. Right hon'ble V.S.Srinivasa Sastri's thinking on this was very logical and laudable. He said, that: 5.

> "I cannot support them in the policy of non-cooperation or in their threatened withdrawal of allegiance-------I do not believe in the efficacy of their methods and I apprehend serious danger from them. The Koraan has said no commandments on me, and even the high authority of Gandhi fails to convert me to the theory that a fellow-citizenship included an unrestricted obligation to suffer for a religion not one's own."

V.S.S.Sastri did not stop at that. On another occasion, he said:

> "The name of Gandhi and the propaganda carried on in the press had already established the gospel of non-cooperation so firmly that nothing for the moment could shake it-------Public life would be poisoned at the fountain if leaders, after making a show of leading, took to following".

After such a sensible exposition of the situation, the future Rt. hon'ble Sastri said, contrasting B.G.Tilak's attitude towards the Montague Reforms with that of Gandhi, that:

> "He discountenanced the suicidal policy of rejecting the reforms and of abandoning the constitutional position gained--------Left to himself, he would never break the law openly and invite the rigours like Mr. Gandhi."

But the trouble with Srinivasa Sastri was that he was a well-dressed scholar, thinker, orator and patriot. He should have taken to loincloth and said all those things in those years of 1920 and 1924. The crowds of people in the Indian streets would have then shouted 'SASTRI-KI-JAI'. People, after all, need some spectacles, and in India there were many turbanned men to see but there was not an English knowing Indian barrister in loincloth or half-naked. It was Gandhi who knew the tricks on how to out-do his opponents. When everyone used to talk in English in the meetings, Gandhi out-did Mrs. Besant, a British lady, by talking only in Hindustani, even in South India. Gandhi out-did Muslim politicians by taking up some extraneous causes like the Khilaffat and thus kept the country guessing. He out-did his associates by promptly confessing all his mistakes which he consistently kept on committing and then consistently confessing. All these kinds of politics of the 1920s make a strange reading today in the 1980s.

Returning from the Belgaum Congress sessions, Mrs. Besant wrote to Srinivasa Sastri on the 29th December 1924 a 'confidential' note which said, that:

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5. Kodanda Rao- a Biography of V.S.S.Sastri.

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"I visited the Congress at Belgaum in order to oppose the resolution giving to the Swarajya party the sole right to speak in the name of the Congress in the Legislatures---------The resolution accepting the Das-Nehru-Gandhi Pact, the 2000-yards of yarn franchise, and giving free hand to the Swarajya party in the Councils was passed before we reached Belgaum. I asked Mr. Gandhi to allow me to state why the National Home Rulers could not join the Congress under the Resolution, and he allowed me to do so; I made a short speech explaining that we could not accept their terms nor the right given to the single party, with whose policy, we disagreed, to represent the Congress--------I asked them to open the Congress door to all political parties as of old. A good deal of sympathy was shown by the audience."

Here it is clear that Gandhi had caused a split in the old Congress organization taking with him his own fresh recruits and well known defectors. Old Annie Besant was seen struggling to heal the wound and thus unite that. It could also be seen here how she tried to have one unified Congress organization. She proceeded to say that:[6]

"I wish to make a proposition: Would it not be well for the political parties outside the Congress and shut out by the resolution, to revive the old Congress, which has the whole Congress history up to Calcutta in I920 behind it, leaving the new Congress a life dating only from September I920 behind it? We should adopt the old policy of having an elected All India Committee, and affiliating all political associations which would accept its creed- Home Rule or Swaraj, within the Empire, and leaving each association free to work for this in its own way. If so, could we not have a Conference, say at Allahabad,--------and revive the old political Congress under whatever name is selected? Personally I feel such a name as the 'All India Political Congress' would be good. It would be fair to ask the Liberal Federation to join the Convention--------."

This showed how Gandhi had succeeded in capturing the Congress to his line of thinking, and how the moderates and old timers were left in utter confusion. This also revealed that the old lady was still on to build up a counter offensive against the domineering hold of Gandhi over the Congress oraganization. An all Parties Conference took place in Delhi in January I925, when a prolonged discussion took place to draw up a scheme and among those who attended that were Motilal Nehru and his son, the Ali Brothers, Mrs. Besant, Jinnah, Lajpat Rai, Shradhananda and many others.

Gandhi's reaction to Mrs. Besant's Commonwealth of India Bill, seemed strange because, according to him, the Bill recognised the King Emperor as ~~sovereign~~ sovereign. This attitude of Gandhi surprised the old lady because she was told that Congress had always rejected the separation of India from the Empire. Gandhi was still the president of the Congress for the year I924-25. In May I925 he met ~~xxx~~ Mrs. Besant separately at Calcutta but the meeting failed to bring them together. One should think that from then on they vastly differed from each other and that was evident because there was no way to bring the two or three divided sections together under the old Congress organization which was no more while Gandhi was firm on the saddle of his own group.

Both Mrs. Besant and Gandhi should be blamed for being the cause for this type of rivalry between them although it was Gandhi who tried to dominate from the day he landed in India from South Africa, and with the incident that took place at the Benares Hindu University. From then on, he consistently tried to keep away from the activities of

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6. T.N.Jagadisan- 'Letters of V.S.S.Sastri (I944) Page I48.

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Annie Besant. Of course, some biographers of Gandhi would be wanting to blame others for the kind of politics that Gandhi played. Annie Besant unsuspectingly and unwittingly called Gandhi a Mahatma and that worked against her because in the Indian conception a 'Mahatma' could no wrong. When Gandhi split the Congress in the later half of the year 1919, those old timers among Indians silently withdrew or unabashedly defected to Gandhi's side leaving the poor old Annie alone to fight against the situation that existed. That certainly helped Gandhi, and the lone voices of Mrs. Besant, Srinivasa Sastri, Jinnah and others were of no avail because their words were drowned by the shouting of the people in streets, and Gandhi-ki-jai was the only words heard all over.

Mrs. Besant left for England in 1925 with B. Shiva Rao. She was given ovations and cheers at railway stations both at Madras and Bombay, and some papers wrote editorials about her. 'When she was interviewed by a group of reporters about the reason why not one like Gandhi, Patel, Das, Motilal, Lajpat Rai, Malaviya, or Waxha has signed her Bill, she produced a different reason for each one'. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu had signed it out of reverence to her old relationship with the author of the Bill, Mrs. Besant.

In London, Mrs. Besant had many receptions, parties and meetings and that was an unique thing in her career. At the Buckingham palace in July 1925, the King and Queen chatted with her. THE TIMES wrote that, 'a striking figure with her uncovered white hair and white and gold robe', was presented by the Home Secretary to the King who had a short conversation with her. The Queen enquired with her about the Girls' College at Benares, which she had visited years back. In this way, Mrs. Besant emerged with her prestige greatly enhanced. She remained in England waiting for the Labour Party Congress that was scheduled to meet in October that year at Liverpool. On the 2nd October, the Chairman of the Conference gave her a warm birthday greetings and told her that the Conference was honoured by her presence. There was a clamour from all sides of that huge gathering to hear her, and Mrs. Besant, in response to their wishes 'graciously delivered' a speech.

With all that, when the resolution on India was introduced, it was another story. The composite resolution recognised the right of the Indian peoples to self-government and self determination, and welcomed the declaration of representative Indian leaders in favour of a free and equal partnership with other members of the British Commonwealth of Nations. It stated that the Conference agreed that the defects inherent in the Government of India Act of 1919. It noted the declaration of the Secretary of State for India that the Government would 'most carefully examine any constitution framed by Indians and carrying with it a fair measure of general agreement among the peoples of India--------." 7.

Thus the Labour party was refusing to back this particular Bill officially while still associating itself with its general purport. Mrs. Besant and her friends did their best to swallow the pill of disappointment, but it was a bitter one. She assured in her NEW INDIA that the Bill would immediately put into the hands of parliamentary draftsmen for further improvement.

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7. Prof. Nethercot on Annie, Vol. II, Page 359.

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Here it should be relevant to say something of Mrs. Besant's Commonwealth of India Bill. That was like a long journey 'from Madras to the House of Commons' in England. The idea was first mooted in February I922 at a discussion on the method of winning SWARAJ, stating that India should resort to a convention for the framing of a Constitution. The discussion went on for many weeks together with a series of articles in the NEW INDIA by leading Indian politicians. In September I922, Mrs. Besant met leading legal luminaries and politicians at Simla, and again at Delhi in February I923. It was said that the candidates of all political parties took the pledge, which also bound them to a call a national Convention, which should frame a Constitution for India.

Then again another Conference was held in February I924 in Delhi and again in April that year at Allahabad. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Srinivasa Sastri were also active members of the Constitution Committee. At the Bombay convention in December I924, a rough draft based on the 'reports committee' was produced and the final draft was committed to a special committee in Madras in April I925 with Mrs. Besant, C.P.Ramaswami Iyer, B. Shiva Rao, Sri Ram and others, with power to correct the wordings and sections accurately. The Constitution draft was finally got ready on the I3th April I925, and the Bill was before the country through the newspapers. It was submitted to the Advisory Committee of the parliamentary Labour Party, discussed clause by clause and then unanimously recommended to his Majesty's Opposition for recognition as an official Bill, and it went through the hands of the solicitor-general of the late Labour Government, for technical corrections. The Bill said, to begin with, thus: 8.

"General Principles: 1) India shall be placed on an equal footing with the self-governing Dominions, sharing their responsibilities and privileges.

2) India shall have the right to self-Government exercised from the village upwards in each successive autonomous area of wider extent,

3) There shall be five units of Government, namely, a) the Village b) the Taluq c) the District d) the Province, excluding the Indian states.

4) The three great spheres of activity- Executive, Legislative and Judicial- shall be independent of each other while correlated in their working.

5) The Government of India Act shall be repealed at the coming into operation of the Commonwealth of India Act.

"Declaration of Rights: 6) The following shall be the Fundamental Rights of every person: a) Inviolability of the liberty of the person and of his dwelling and property.

b) Freedom of conscience and the free profession and practice of religion,

c) Free expression of opinion and the right of assembly peaceably and without arms and of forming associations or unions.

d) Free elementary education.

e) Use of roads, places dedicated to the public, courts of justice and the like;

f) Equality before the law, irrespective of consideration of Nationality; and,

g) Equality of the sexes.

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8. The Besant Spirit- Vol. 3, Page I37, Adyar Edition.

"The All-India Government: 7) There shall be a parliament which shall consist of the Governor-General as the King's representative, a Senate and a Legislative Assembly;

"The Senate: 9) The Senate shall be composed of 100 citizens of not less than thirty years of age who have done honour to the Nation by reason of useful public service.

"The Legislative Assembly: 12) The Legislative Assembly shall be composed of 300 citizens of not less than 25 years of age-------.

13) The life of the Legislative Assembly shall ordinarily be for five years-------.

Local Self-Government: 48) The village (Rural), or Ward (Urban), the Taluka, the District (Rural), or Municipality (Urban) shall be the units of Local self-Government.

50) There shall be a Panchayat in each village composed of citizens and elected annually by all residents of 21 years of age--------.

54) There shall be a Board (Rural) or Council (Urban) in each district composed of citizens of 25 years of age and above, and elected every three years from amongst those possessing any one of the following qualifications:

a) Education up to the lower-secondary or middle school grade, b) ex-Membership of Taluka Boards or Ward Panchayats, having served for one complete term-------,"

The Bill had in all sixty-one articles, with several valuable provisions. The Parliament had full powers. It was this Bill that failed to find favour of Gandhi and his coteries just on minor flimsy grounds. However, the Labour party in England, seeing that there was no unanimity in India on the Bill, was reluctant to support that, and they were, of course, quite right. Gandhi wanted his own way and his own views to prevail. At a meeting of the all parties' Conference, when this Bill was brought forward with a proposal for adoption, it could not even find a seconder. Reason: According to the friends of Mrs. Besant, 'because of technicality in placing it properly on the agenda'. That needs no comments, and the statement is hardly convincing. Anyway it seemed that those men, mere politicians, were so spiteful, and they seemed to have been as spiteful as those men shouting their names in the streets like Gandhi-ki-jai and so on.

In December 1925, back in England, Lord George Lansbury, brought the revised Bill as a private member's measure without the backing of the Labour party. He was supported by only eleven members. Then finding no one else to push it, that went to the parliamentary back-shelf, from which it was never withdrawn. Mrs. Besant and her friends knew that their Bill that they got up with so much effort was bypassed and, yet pretended as though the Bill was still alive. Within themselves, they felt bitterly for the betrayal of their countrymen, the so called Congress led by Gandhi. Mrs. Besant returned to India ~~in November~~ after delivering a series of lectures at Queen's Hall which used to be packed to capacity every time. She landed in Colombo on time for the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Theosophical Society (1875-1925) at Adyar. Her ardent biographer, Prof. Nethercot said, that:

"She and her friends were still struggling to serve the world even though it did not seem to care to be served."

Her friends included Muhammad Ali, Malaviya, Jinnah, Sastri, Sapru, Jayakar, Joshi, Baptista, Pal, Hornimann, Ramaswami Iyer and Dwarakanath Das brothers, and they tried to advance by all constitutional means. The British Government knew the eminence of

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and intelligence of these men who were behind Mrs. Besant. They picked up men like Sapru, Jayakar, Sastri, Iyer and others for better jobs. These men gave their energy and intelligence to the Government and served in responsible posts while Gandhi's men, most of whom were glorified patriots, and failures as lawyers, derided their above named opponents as supporters of the British Government. Among those men, Srinivasa Sastri rose up to the positions of agent-general, privy-councillor and was hailed as a great orator.

Mrs. Besant, of course, as the TIMES OF INDIA called her, was 'a party in herself', and she was just a waning star. She was nearing 80 but she was alert and energetic both in body and mind. In Gandhi's camp there was a lady, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, formerly a protege of Annie. Gandhi made her the President of Kanpur Congress in 1925. That same year Chittaranjan Das died. Gandhi attended his funeral in Calcutta. Those were the days when the close followers of the Mahatma looked like many smaller Mahatmas and that was how ~~the~~ scores of Congressmen who moved around Gandhi behaved. D.F.Karaka, a biographer of Gandhi said that:

> "A country like India, so impressionable, so believing, so very superstitious, could hardly resist the presence in their midst of a man who behaved like a saint", and Gandhi 'behaved' like a saint, 'spoke' like a prophet and 'conducted himself like a messiah'.

So Gandhi just behaved, spoke and conducted as such but then how was he in actual life? Of course, politicians everywhere are good actors. Gandhi's associate, Mahadev Desai, spoke of Gandhi's 'fearlessness, his fasts, his refusal to respect the threats' etc, but all that, as the Western observers were commenting, was due to the goodness, softness and liberalism of the British Government. They asked that would a Gandhi have flourished in the way he did in a French, a Portuguese, a Czarist or any other colonial empires? Well, that's a question that misinformed Gandhians should answer objectively.

In the same spirit of broadminded outlook and goodness, Mrs. Besant too hailed Gandhi as a 'great man' and that was in 1915 and 1916, and she called him with as many high-sounding epithets as she could, but when she came to know intimately thereafter, she was greatly disappointed. Afterwards she stopped saying anything good about Gandhi. Many Europeans too hailed Gandhi as great and as a saint and they included the Judge who tried him in the court for his complicity in the violent demonstration and sedition. Those distant observers like Romain Rolland, Bernard Shaw and Albert Einstein too hailed Gandhi as great but they knew him only through newspaper reports. Miss Lillian Slade, daughter of an English Admiral, then 33 years old, tall, handsome and with a flair for music, became a disciple of Gandhi after offering herself to lean an ascetic life, and she was called Mirabehn. Some of the left-wing politicians in England too began to look upon Gandhi in that same respectful manner and they included Lord Reginald Sorenson. Lord Fenner Brockway and a few others. Some Christian missionaries like Rev. J.H.Holmes of America too admired Gandhi, and whose opinion about Gandhi was already quoted. ~~Hmkes~~ Rev. Holmes was present at the Kanpur session of the Congress presided over by Mrs. Sarojini Naidu. This, of course, is a small list of Gandhians of Gandhi's time.

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A sad fact in the life of Gandhi and, for that matter, even of Mrs. Besant, was that their family lives were not happy. Gandhi, though seemed to have been a happily married man, it was not really so. As to Mrs. Besamt, she had troubles with her husband on account of temperamental incompatibility, and therefore, they separated and all that was well known. Her two children, a boy, Digby, and a girl, Mabel, were brought up well, and things went on with them in a normal way. But in respect of Gandhi, there was a good deal of headache for him due to his sons, especially the eldest one. Much of it was due to Gandhi himself who behaved even within the family as a 'dictator'. He did not give them good education in the way that he himself acquired by going abroad after breaking the caste traditions.

It looked as though Gandhi was highly envious as a grown up man. He would cover up that envy by preaching his children and others about ascetic life, patriotism, service and so on. Mrs. Vijayalaxmi Pandit once told a story that on her wedding night when she went with her husband to greet Gandhi and seek his blessings, the old crank told the young couple, or lectured them, about their responsibility to the country, their service and so on. The young Vijayalaxmi promptly silenced the old ego-maniac man in her own mild way.

Gandhi's envious make up had gone to the extent ~~by~~ of forcing his wife and children to take to ascetic life, spinning, self-help, etc. His eldest son Harilal would have been all right if Gandhi had treated him like a sane father. Some of his Muslim friends had told him in South Africa to give his aspiring son, Harilal, some foreign education and that they would help him financially, but Gandhi behaved,like what? Was it jealousy? People might raise their eyebrows if Mahatmas are described as such, but in the world of humans there are no Mahatmas, only the just mortals of filthy minds and habits. Let us make sure about that before going through the stories of any Mahatmas anywhere.

From the way Gandhi treated Mrs. Annie Besant, one could confidently say, that Gandhi was very much an imperfect individual. His behaviour ~~with~~ generally contributed to the perversions of his son Harilal. He was unnecessarily dragged into his father's HARTAL exhibitions in the South African streets and thus the old crank ruined a promising future of his son. Indeed, there are many such jealous fathers in the world. Later in India Harilal became a 'rolling stone' and got involved in unhealthy business transactions. He realised that his father had spoilt him and as a revenge and to wreck the old man's reputation, he became a Muslim calling himself Abdullah Gandhi. But the older man had known to save his face every time by quickly confessing anything and everything to prove his Mahatma-hood, but even his confessions need not be literally that what he had been saying. Long back when Harilal's transactions became a public gossip, Gandhi wrote in his YOUNG INDIA of the I8th June I925, that:

> "I do indeed happen to be the father of Harilal M. Gandhi. He is my eldest boy, is over 36 years old and is father of four children-------It has been my invariable rule to regard my boys as my friends and equals as soon as they completed their sixteen years--------I do not know Harilal's affairs. He meets me occasionally, but I never

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pry into his affairs. I do not know how his affairs stand at present except that they are in a bad way--------Let the client's example be a warning against people being guided by big names in their transactions. Men may be good, not necessarily their children."

Note the last sentence above. 'Men may be good, but not necessarily their children'. But that could be turned the other way, too, because in this world there are several bad fathers who ill-treat or neglect the good children's interests in order to feed their own vanity. Robert Payne commented on Gandhi's 'confessional utterances' saying that the above said words, 'rarely pleased his more intelligent followers who detected a note of self-praise even when he humbled himself.' G.D.Birla, the millionairre who supported Gandhi's activities with large donations 'questioned the need for the confession' made as above. On the whole, the entire joke of the world is when people are burdened with worries in their private life, they become saints in public life. Gandhi's numerous confessions reveal what he was and where his stubborn as well as spiteful politics led him and also the country. It was said that:

"After a decade of his experiments with Truth and SATYAGRAHA, he got so much dejected that he preferred to remain a hermit in his ASHRAM. The task of leading India into another fray was too much for him and he believed that India was not yet in a position to respond."

This seemed to have been a laboured realization, after giving a deaf ear to all that those senior leaders of the country had been telling him so many times that he should listen to others, he should go slow, and so on. But Gandhi's list of confessions, makes a distressing reading because with that he mocks himself and fools none. After consistently adhering to his own views and without listening to anyone, and after politely turning against the intelligentia of the country who included Mrs. Besant, Gandhi said in Calcutta, in I925, that:

"I have admitted my incompetence. I have admitted that I have been found wanting as a physician prescribing a cure for this malady. I do not find that either Hindus or Muslims are ready to accept my cure------."

These words are blurted only to get some more sympathy and support to his own brand of SATYAGRAHA politics. Moreover, Gandhi, as already said, was very fond of blood, or seeing that blood is shed somewhere, and he proceeded saying that:

"Before we can come together, we must shed one another's blood, then I say, the sooner we do so, the better it is for us. If we propose to break one another's heads, let us do so in a manly way. Let us then shed crocodile tears; let us not ask for sympathy from any quarter-------."

The whole thing is just a wild cry of a frustrated and yet a wily person. How much he meant all that he was saying, he alone knew because the country was simply lost in admiring a man in loincloth and whom it didn't really know! But then there was an intelligent and sincere nationalist in Mrs. Annie Besant who had known Gandhi, not from I9I4 to I9I7, but only from I9I8 and after. From then on she knew him very well and she would not be a stupid to express her feelings and conclusions as she did for some time. But all the same, she silently watched things in her old age, and was sorry for the way the things were going on all those years in the Nineteen-twenties!

CHAPTER XIV.

DOMINION STATUS Vs. 'FULL FREEDOM'.

The All India Congress Committee met at Ahmadabad in 1926. Mrs. Besant attended the meeting and attempted to strive for unity among the leaders of the freedom movement. She and Madan Mohan Malaviya- both ex-presidents of the Congress, sat on the dais with the President. The President of the Congress of the previous year, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, sat with Gandhi who had taken a neutral position, and he did not take part in the discussion, either! Mrs. Besant was willing to become an active member of the Congress again. She was ready to compromise with the Indian leaders on her Commonwealth of India Bill, but not with the British Government on any of the provisions of the Bill. That same year she left for England with Krishnamurthi. She was given a hearty send off with speeches, ovations etc and she gave some newspaper interviews, also. Her old friends were always there. Annie's biographer said, that: I.

> "But none of these manifold demonstrations of her good-will to India were sufficient to restore her to the place in the hearts of the Indian people which she had once held. From England she flew to Holland and then again back in a little one-engine FOKKER. She attended the Theosophical convention in Glasgow and another one in London. She delivered four lectures at Queen's Hall--------."

In July 1926, the NEW YORK TIMES hailed her as 'India's Grand Old Woman', and her fame as a mystic and champion of India followed her all over the world. She took with her Krishnamurthi to make a Messiah of him. She had many receptions in America. In Chicago, Krishna was given a grand reception. Mrs. Besant, like a true superstitious Hindu woman, had a lot of things to say about her Messiah- G. Krishnamurthi, and called him a messenger, a Maitreya, Agastya and so on, and her political opponents made fun of her curious ways. In America she travelled widely and covered some parts of Canada, up to that corner of Vancouver and Seattle, to which places she went for the second time. The first time she had such a continent-wide tour was in 1909, and till then, and even after that, she had been in America and Australia many a time.

On her return she came to Europe, and flew all over and delivered 56 lectures in the year 1927 alone, when she was exactly 80 years old. The younger members of her party would ~~feel~~ exhausted but not she who would look younger, calmer and more stable. On the 12th October 1927, she left for India from London with a surprise gift of £. 35,000 in the will of one Mrs. Edith Annie Hamilton, a daughter of a tobacco millionaire.

After her arrival in India, she called a meeting of her Home Rule League, with the name- Commonwealth of India League. In a full-page article, 'India- a Nation', she said, 'I shall see Home Rule in India before I die'. The TIMES OF INDIA of August 1927, published the review of R. Palme Dutt's MODERN INDIA, Sylvia Pankhurst's INDIA AND THE EARTHLY PARADISE and Mrs. Besant's INDIA- BOND OR FREE?'

I. Prof. Nethercot on Annie, Vol. II, pages 379 & 380.

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Viceroy Lord Reading retired in April 1926, and he was succeeded by Lord Irwin, the future Viscount Halifax. He hailed from Yorkshire, and he was deeply religious, gentle and even diffident in manner'. At the same time in the White Hall, in the office of the Secretary of State for India, sat the burly figure of the late Lord Birkenhead who had once been just Mr. P. E. Smith. As an able lawyer, he had made good contribution to the jurisprudence of his time, but then it was said, that:

> "The appointment of Birkenhead at the India Office was an unfortunate event for India--------When it was announced at the fag end of 1927 that there was to be no Indian on the Royal Commission appointed to draft the future constitution of India. This must have been the reason for Motilal Nehru, the author of the Nehru Report, to blurt out in the court, that: 'I throw a challenge to Lord Birkenhead across the seas!"

Swami Shradhanand, the former Mahatma Munshiram, the founder of Gurukul in the shadow of the Himalayas, had welcomed Gandhi after his return to India. He was a saffron-robed monk who had taken to militant Hindu politics. He was a powerfully built man, loved by the Hindus and feared by the Muslims for his biting tongue. He had once mentioned that he had been getting letters threatening his life. Gandhi said when he heard about that that he too was getting such letters, and added that: 'a man died well if he died at the hands of an assassin.'

Some months later, when the Swami was ill, he had a strange visitor, a young Muslim called Abdul Rashid who said that he was sent by God, and that the Swami should listen. He would not leave the Swami's house, but asked for a cup of water to quench his thirst. As the servant left for fetching water, the Swami was brutally stabbed in the chest by Rashid. Mirabehn was there but she stood helplessly, shocked and dazed.

What was clear from this assassination was that the Muslims were becoming increasingly free with knives and guns, and the gap between Hindus and Muslims, was widening. Gandhi's politics with Muslims did not pay dividends and his slogan- 'Hindu-Muslim unity', remained only a slogan in the streets of India. Neither Hindus nor Muslims wanted that unity. The Muslim leaders of the time kept away from Gandhi and the Hindu orthodox class too did the same. Therefore, in the end, Gandhi was left alone but surrounded, as already said, by some opportunisits, and later glorified as great nationalists. In that way Gandhi's politics was far away from reality because it was his own own policy that ultimately transformed him as a leader of Hindus and not that of both Muslims and Hindus. In January 1927, Gandhi told at a meeting in Bengal that the Hindu-Muslim problem has passed out of human hands into God's hands.

Here it would be relevant to refer to another Hindu revolutionary, Vinayak D. Savarkar, who had known Gandhi for a long time while both of them were in London for some time in 1909. After that they met in 1927. Savarkar who was convicted for his complicity in the murder of Sir Curzon Wyllie in London, and one Mr. Jackson, an officer in Nasik. After his adventure of jumping from the ship in the French shores, he was brought to India and later transported to life imprisonment in Andamans. But then in 1924, he was brought

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back to India and was put under house arrest in Ratnagiri. When Gandhi visited the town in 1927, he said that he had come to the celebrated birthplace of Lokamanya Tilak, and 'of another leader'. He said that he had known Savarkar well and also all about his spirit of sacrifice. This public speech of Gandhi was followed by a brief meeting with Savarkar. They spoke about their old days in London, and after that there was some fairly acrimonious exchange, somewhat on these lines:

> "It is clear that we disagree on some problems' said Gandhi, 'but I hope that you have no objection to my making experiments'. Savarkar was not in an amiable mood. 'You know the story of the boys and frogs?' he said. 'You will be making the experiment at the cost of the nation", Savarkar said."

There was a lot of truth in what Savarkar said, and for what Swami Shradhanand sacrificed his life. Gandhi could not take Muslims with him because Muslims found out that Gandhi had not acknowledged the fact that Muslims were a different nation within India. What was pitiable in all this was that Gandhi could have followed Mrs. Annie Besant whose opinion on this important subject was as under: 2.

> "Islam had a great part to play in Indian life. Mussalmans were one Nation in their faith. They were all brothers and lived brotherhood, while many other religions taught it but did not practise it. Islam was one great democratic religion of the world--------At present, the obstacle to Indian freedom was the quarrel between Hindus and Muslims, and it was said that only the British people could hold the scales between the two faiths. India had a life of practically immemorial, and she had still so much to give to the world; but she could not do that while she had her internal troubles, and so long as Hindus and Mussalmans were quarrelling with one another. There were no quarrels in villages where Hindus and Mussalmans lived side by side--------."

This was what most of the people among both the Hindus and Muslims were genuinely thinking in those days. Gandhi should have seen the spirit of the Muslim arguments instead of his own slogans. Mrs. Besant had taken her stand on the right lines but she was not heard. She was still hoping that her Commonwealth of India Bill would be taken up by the Labour Party in England while the Conservatives had cold-storaged it. But in Gandhi's camp too there was a talk on framing a constitution. At the Congress Committee meeting, Motilal Nehru brought forward a suggestion to frame a constitution in consultation with the elected members of the Central and provincial legislatures and party leaders. This idea was not favoured, however, by most of the members.

In October 1927, Lord Irwin invited the Indian leaders to meet him in Delhi to discuss the appointment of a parliamentary committee known as the Statutory Commission headed by Sir John Simon. From Mangalore in the west coast, Gandhi hurried back to Delhi, cancelling all his programmes. Yet all he got from the Viceroy was a copy of the announcement of the Secretary of State regarding the appointment of the Royal Commission. "When asked whether that was all the business", Lord Irwin said 'Yes'. Gandhi felt that an anna envelope would have reached it to him.

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2. NEW INDIA- the 28th February 1929, quoted by Nethercot, Vol. II.

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There was not much enthusiasm in the Indian circles regarding this Simon Commission. Robert Bernays said that the Viceroy should 'have yielded to the clamour of the Indian politicians that they should have direct representation on the Commission'. Gandhi made it clear that he was not interested. The Viceroy had a long talk with him. Mrs. Besant too called it 'an insult' to India because there was no Indian member in it. It was called 'the white seven', the 'all White Commission' and so on. For the next two months she stormed about India forming Committees and exacting pledges to boycott the Committee entirely. In this she joined the ailing Gandhi and other leaders.

The annual Congress Sessions were held at Madras in 1927, and the President Dr. Ansari said that: "We alone know our needs and requirements best, and ours must be the decisive voice in the determination of our future. It is our inherent and inalienable right." The Simon Commission or the Statutory Commission, as already said, had only the British members in it. The Commission landed in Bombay on the 3rd February 1928, and for the first time after six years, the whole of India was stirred to action and agitation against the Commission. The members of the Commission were greeted with black flags and general boycott. Lord Irwin acted heroically in an attempt to draw the antagonists together hoping against hope that the Congress leaders would meet the British halfway, only to find that they were more determined than ever to achieve 'PURNA SWARAJ' or complete independence. But at the other end the attitude hardened; the breach between Hindus and Muslims was growing wider; the Congress was riding high with younger men like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose.

The cry that was heard all over the country was 'Go Back,Simon'! The Central Assembly was the centre of many unpleasant exchanges between elected representatives of the people and the nominated members of the Government. At the Centre, the first Indian elected Speaker, Vittalbhai Patel, a man of independent attitude, threatened to resign. It was during this agitation, Lala Lajpat Rai in the Punjab, Govind Vallabh Pant in Uthar Pradesh and several others, received LATHI blows from the police, and for some time there was a sudden upsurge among the masses all over India. Mrs. Besant led a procession of 12,000 Indian Boy Scouts in Bombay in December 1927 against the Statutory Commission.

In February 1928, at Benares, the first star camp was held under the auspices of the theosophical society. Krishnamurthi had then developed his 'strange new independence'. Mrs. Besant's account of that meet was, that she said, "Krishnaji read one of his beautiful poems, and then asked me to speak; I, of course, obeyed his wish, but spoke briefly, knowing that the assembly wanted to hear him rather than me."

Thus 'the most famous woman orator' had abdicated to her pupil. 'On February 29, (1928), soon after his farewell address, Krishna and his party started off to Europe and America". Annie Besant hailed Krishnamurthi as a world teacher, and Rukmini Devi as a World Mother, with the hope that they would continue her work and carry on her message all over the world; but these ' Teacher ' and ' Mother ', did little in that direction after Annie's departure from the scene.

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An all Parties Conference on a SWARAJ constitution, was held at Bombay in May 1928. The TIMES OF INDIA thought that in spite of unbalanced representation, it was saved from complete failure only by Mrs. Besant's motion, supported by Gandhi's absentia, that a Committee be appointed to prepare a draft constitution before the Ist July 1928, so that a full meeting of the all Parties conference at Delhi in August of that year might study and pass it before the Statutory Commission returned. Mrs. Besant announced that she intended to go back to England only in June 1928 in order to explain the British public why India had boycotted the Simon Commission. Some charged the Government again that of interfering with her main text and her press copy. She finally sailed on the 2nd June 1928. THE TIMES, London, referred to her as India's 'ambassador' to England.

During her stay in London, she lectured at Queen's Hall. lunched with Arthur Henderson, had a long talk with Ramsay Macdonald who said that he hoped India would get Dominion Status within a few months. Her discussion with the British Committee on Indian affairs and with several Labour Members of the Parliament, resulted in a widely published rumour that the Labour Party ~~members of Parliament~~ had offered her a safe seat in Parliament if she wished to, but the NEW INDIA said that there was no foundation to the report.

The political events of 1928-29, marked the end of Annie Besant's heroic struggle to obtain self-Government for India on her own terms and by her own methods. Her adherents have always maintained that Dominion Status would actually have been achieved much more quickly than it was if her counsel had been listened to. But by this time, the Indians were in no mood to listen to mere reason or to assume good will or good intentuons on the part of their opponents or oppressors, as many would have called them. Besides they had a native hero of more spectacular, if homely, characteristics, than hers. The rivals were both mystics, but 'Mohandas Gandhi went about in loincloth. Annie Besant impressed the world with her lovely, but expensive, white robes and her ritualistic, but costly jewellery.' 3.

On her return from the foreign tour in August 1928, she grasped at the newly issued Motilal Nehru report which had considerable opposition from most Muslims and some Hindus because it did not solve the communal and minority problems. Mrs. Besant disagreed with its advocacy of universal suffrage for all Indians whereas her own constitution proposed a graduated suffrage according to literacy- though with her continuing work for women's rights in India, she would make women equal with them in this respect. 4.

Mrs. Besant had advocated a type of democracy for India which would start without the defects which Lord Bryce regretted in the British system. She would have adult franchise in the villages and prescribe qualifications of an ascending degree, based on property, education and previous public service for the affairs of the taluq, the district,

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3. Nethercot on Annie Besant, Vol. II, Page 401 & 413,
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the province and finally the Centre. Srinivasa Sastri admitted that this system of 'graduated democracy' attracted him, but pointed out that it would also be a graduated oligarchy. 5.

At the All Parties Conference at Lucknow she was temporarily heartened by being voted into the chair, and was given a prolonged ovation when she came to the rostrum to give her approval to the Report. Later, it underwent various amendments and compromises. Mrs. Besant was taken as one of the members of the all Parties Committee and for the specific purpose of preparing a Bill along the lines of the Nehru Report, and holding a convention at Madras to consider the results. Nethercot wrote that:

> "At this time Gandhi was all smiles and sugar. On Annie's birthday, the October Ist I928, when celebrations were held all over India and world by her friends, and a marble bust of hers was being unveiled at Bombay, he himself presided over a public meeting at Ahmadabad under the auspices of its Youth League and advised his audience to imitate her many great virtues of fairness, simplicity and self-control. Mrs. Besant, he said, had succeeded in linking religion and politics."

Annie Besant reciprocated by inserting a note into her NEW INDIA, on Gandhi's birthday, the 2nd October, in which she praised his patriotism, but ended with a subtle admonishment in a casual reminder that 'he had more or less retired from politics'. 6.

When the Motilal Nehru report came out, together with the report, some time later, of the Statutory Commission, Mrs. Besant characterised them as positive and negative aspects of the same problem. She toured all over India in the cause of Nehru Report, and for a moment she forgot the cause of her own Constitution- the Commonwealth of India Bill.

In the meeting of the Congress Working Committee in November I928, there was an effort to pass a resolution on complete independence, and Srinivasa Iyangar who was the President of the Gauhati Congress in I926, succeeded in that and the supporters of the resolution tried to amend the Motilal Nehru Report which had many ideas of Mrs. Besant. She and Lajpat Rai abstained from voting for the amendment of the report.

Mrs. Besant proposed at this meeting that the all Parties Conference should become a permanent organization, which should serve as a kind of rival to the Indian National Congress, but working side by side with it. She was, however, still in Congress, and was an ex-President. But by seeing the attitude of some members at the meeting, she could not work whole-heartedly with them. It was said that she had 'a painful impression of unreality and insincerity' of those who took part in it. Her views for the Dominion Status were backed by the President-elect of the Congress, Motilal Nehru, and the ex-President of the Congress, Dr. Ansari and other leading figures. A good many of them were with her for unity resolutions and in supporting the Nehru Report. Now all eyes turned to the Calcutta Congress when the Congress passed a resolution in the form of an ultimatum to the Government. The resolution, in part, said that:

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5. P.Kodanda Rao on Srinivasa Sastri, Page II6.
6. Nethercot- on Annie, Vol. II, Page 4I4.

"Subject to the exigencies of the political situation, this Congress will adopt the Constitution if it is accepted in its entirety by the British Parliament on or before the 31st December 1929, but in the event of its non-acceptance by the date or its earlier rejection, the Congress will organise a campaign of non-violent non-cooperation, by advising the country to refuse taxation and in such other manner as may be decided upon--------."

The resolution concluded saying that:

"In consistent with the above, nothing in this resolution shall interfere with the carrying on in the name of the Congress of the propaganda for complete independence."

This ultimatum was politely sent to the Viceroy although some younger members were not in favour of taking any notice of the Viceroy or anyone else. In the meantime, an invitation came to Gandhi to undertake an European tour in the following year and that was the time when the world had begun to take more interest in the Indian affairs. But gandhi declined the offer stating that there was a great deal of work to be done in India as a result of the Congress ultimatum to the Government. He said:

"A voice from within tells me that I must not hold myself in readiness to do what comes in my way, but I must even think out and suggest means of working out what to me is a great programme. Above all, I must prepare myself for the next year's struggle, whatever shape it may take."

The role of Mrs. Besant, at the same time, at the Calcutta Congress, was not insignificant. The Nehru Report which had supported the idea of Dominion Status was favoured by J.M.Sen Gupta and other senior leaders while Srinivasa Iyangar and some younger members were against that. It was then Annie Besant created a stir by maintaining that India should follow Ireland's example of Home Rule. Gandhi had almost supported the demand for the Dominion Status while Jawaharlal Nehru declared that a step ahead for complete freedom alone would satisfy the country. It was said that he broke with his father and took his stand for full independence.

Mrs. Besant was glad that Gandhi supported her view on dominion status. Later he agreed to a compromise with Srinivasa Iyangar. The report thereafter was that Gandhi was returning to politics. But what was this Gandhi's 'returning and retiring' from politics? Was he playing a sly game of working behind the backs of others? In fact, Gandhi had never 'retired' to Himalayas or from politics, nor did he 'return' from anywhere. He was always there giving an impression to the people as though he was above all other humans in the Congress and the country. Indeed, Gandhi knew to play politics. Anyway he emerged from somewhere and promised those who were not for the dominion status that if that 'status' were not won or ~~idix~~ indissolubly promised, before the 31st December 1929, a year earlier than the date Mrs. Besant had set, he would himself lead the movement for complete and separate independence. His resolution said, that:

"Congress would organise a new non-violent, non-cooperation movement including non-payment of taxes, and the resolution should be sent directly to Parliament in London. Motilal Nehru, Mrs. Besant, Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Tej Bahadur Supru were not at all consulted about this. Thus a stage was set." 7.

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7. Nethercot- on Annie Besant, Vol. II, Page 416.

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So when, before '20,000 colourful delegates' and after five years of debate, on the 30th December I928, Gandhi's resolution was passed overwhelmingly. It was then said that 'it was the first nail in the coffin of the Motilal Nehru Report'.

Mrs. Besant was still protesting. Later, Motilal Nehru acted at Gandhi's suggestion and adjourned the all Parties Conference. Annie made a series of suggestions and statements to the press. About Gandhi, she said, 'he came, he saw, he conquered'. She also bitterly added that he pulled Motilal to his side. Though Nehru's nomination as the President of Congress was reaffirmed by the delegatesm she said: 'Gandhi had actually been sitting by his side and virtually controlled the proceedings'. She, therefore, felt herself bound in honour dissociate herself from the affairs of the Congress.

"Mr. Gandhi's influence on politics since he came to India, " she said, unburdening her long-stored-up rancour, "has always been destructive". 8.

About Gandhi's programmes and actions being 'destructive', had been already said by one and all of the senior leaders of the time beginning from Gokhale, Tilak and Tagore to Jinnah, V.S.S.Sastri and Savarkar. Among these it was an unfortunate role of the English woman, Mrs. Besant to stand against Gandhi and point out to him that his actions were 'destructive'. But her voice was silenced by Gandhi's sycophants who included Motila Nehru, Chittaranjan Das, Vittalbhai Patel and his brother Vallabhbai, Vijayaraghavachari and Rajagopalachari of South India, and several others. These sycophants in their own selfish interest allowed Gandhi to go on committing his 'Himalayan blunders',and these flourished without the common people being unaware of what those men and stood for except that they showed their anti-British stance with their white cap, DHOTI etc and Gandhi in his loincloth. At this distance of the time, one cannot but conclude that those people who formed Gandhi's gang appeared to have been a sort of jokers, also.

Mrs. Annie Besant silently wondered the way things were going on. For a realistic politician like her, the Indians gave a very poor opinion about themselves. Even though she was 8I now, she was on doing some concrete and realistic job. Gandhi always took or dealt the national issues in his own way, and his cronies and coteries would quickly submit to whatever their 'master' said or did. The much-publicised Motilal Nehru report was itself abandoned by its 'father' because Gandhi wanted it to go that way. It seemed that Gandhi played a lot of hide-and-seek politics. He would keep away from the party meetings and at the same time would see things go on in his own way. He took special delight in opposing the views of Mrs. Besant while the rest of his Indian opponents silently withdrew. But Annie vowed that with Tej Bahadur Sapru and National Home Rule League, she would continue to work for the Nehru Report. Her last significant programme in India was her presiding over the Uthar Pradesh Liberal conference in March I929 at Lucknow where she spoke extempore for ninety minutes. Sapru proposed her name as the President of the Federation.

Some time later, Gandhi declared that a voice from within told him to prepare himself for the struggle, whatever shape it might take. That was 'in its way a prediction

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of the trouble that was to come'. Gandhi made much of his intution as though none others had such motivated thoughts. Instead of concentrating on solving the existed problems, Gandhi was taking delight in creating problems by his 'SATYAGRAHA' stunts in order to show to the country that he was still active. In February 1929 there was a feeling in India that his 'struggle' that he intended to launch would result in some sort of mass resistance and violence in view of the 'humiliation suffered by the people by the appointment of the Statutory Commission' with deliberate exclusion of Indians from its personnel. Gandhi was often waiting to create unrest in the country taking such things as an excuse for his 'movements'.

Events soon took a rapid turn elsewhere. The Statutory Commission returned to England. Baldwin, Birkenhead and the rest of the Tory leaders were out of office and the Labour party had gained a victory at the polls. In May 1929, Ramsay Macdonald became once more the prime minister and Wedgewood Benn became the Secretary of State for India. Lord Irwin, the Viceroy, in the meantime, took four months' leave and rushed to England "to devise some means whereby the constitutional question might be clarified, and a greater degree of cooperation obtained from all sections of Indian political opinion." 8.

The Viceroy returned in October (~~that~~ 1929) and laid before the Indian people, proposals which went a long way to show that His Majesty's Government had changed its attitude towards India and that it had realised the Indian cooperation in order to effect a lasting solution of the Indian problem. Thus for the first time it was officially recognised that the destiny of India was bound up with that of the princely states, and that its future would have to be determined in relation to those autonomous and sovereign pockets to which geographically, it was permanently bound. This was in essence the fulfilment of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru's consideration of a federal scheme for India.

The second important announcement was the formation of a conference at which British and Indian delegates would meet to consider proposals which would finally be submitted to Parliament. That was to be the first Round Table Conference. The last part of that announcement was the enunciation of the British policy with regard to India and the goal which it was striving to achieve. It was said that:

> "It is His Majesty's will and pleasure that the plans laid by Parliament in 1919 should be the means by which British India may attain its due place among his Dominions. Ministers of the Crown, moreover, have more than ones publicly declared that it is the desire of the British government that Indian should, in the fullness of time, take her place in the Empire in equal partnership with the Dominions."

The Congress Working Committee considered the Viceroy's announcement carefully and expressed its desire to cooperate and work for a peaceful solution of India's problems. One of the conditions that it laid down was that as the Indian National Congress was the largest among the progressive political organizations, it should have a predominant representation. Another clarification that sought was about Dominion Status. The

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8. Nethercot- on Annie, Page 416, Vol. II &
D.F.Karaka on Gandhi- 'Out of Dust'.

Congress Party said among other things that:

> "We understand, however, that the conference is to meet not to discuss when Dominion Status is to be established, but to frame the scheme of a Dominion constitution for India."

Gandhi was ready to cooperate with the Government. In those days Gandhi would quickly agree to any kind of programme and to 'cooperate' in things if Mrs. Besant's hands are not there. Gandhi's so called 'principles' also would change as winter changes into summer and summer into some other season. In this respect of Dominion Status, Gandhi said in his own 'political' language that:

> "I can wait for a Dominion constitution if I can get real Dominion Status in action. This is to say, if there is a real change of heart, a real desire on the part of the British people to see India a free and self-respecting nation, and on the part of the officials in India a true spirit of service. But this means substitution of the steel bayonet on the goowill of the people."

Gandhi also said, "My conception of dominion status implies present ability to sever the British connection, if I wish to." Here one should note Gandhi's self-conceit, arrogance etc. Note also the fact that he personified himself with the country. Note his first person singular- in the above statement. With just a loincloth to attract the attention of the people, this half-naked person talked in the terms: 'IF I WISHED TO', he would do that and he would do this. His cheap gimmicks could be seen when he said about'the substitution of the steel bayonet by the goodwill of the people' as though his men had no steel helmeted men to crush their opponents.

With all this one cannot but admire the then Empirical power, the British, who simply allowed people of this kind, either in South Africa, India or anywhere, to go about in the way they did. That is still an unanswered question about the British when generally people find it difficult discern facts from fictions.

The new Labour Government in England, with the Secretary of State for India Wedgewood Benn as its spokesman, tried to bring some understanding between the Congress and the Government. It was the time when Lord Irwin had a miraculous escape from a bomb explosion which might well have wrecked his train. Gandhi went with several others to Delhi to see the Viceroy and to know the real position regarding Dominion Status. Lord Irwin regretted he could not give them any assurance on the point and both the parties knew that cooperation among them under such a situation was really difficult.

When these developments were taking place, Mrs. Besant was certainly a disappointed person. Though she was 82 in 1929, she was as active as ever. She was not at all happy with the things that were happening. She preferred to spend a retired life in Adyar in her room that was the official residence of the President of the International Theosophical Society. Due to the shortage of funds, her daily NEW INDIA was stopped and its supporter P.K.Telang returned to Bombay to spend his last days. The paper, however continued as 'India's International Weekly'. She no longer had enough financial resources.

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Annie Besant left for England again in April 1929, for her usual Queen's Hall lectures, and that was her platform for the propagation of her ideals of Dominion Status, Commonwealth of India Bill, Home Rule for India, etc. C.P.Ramaswami Iyer too followed her, and by that time, Sir John Simon and his team of members of the Statutory Commission, had returned home with their report. When Ramsay Macdonald again returned to power in England, Mrs. Besant was happy, and with Wedgewood Benn as Secretary of State for India, her hopes revived. 'She tried to pump new blood into her anaemic Commonwealth of India Bill and also the India League which had evolved from the old British Auxiliary'. Krishna Menon, who was her protege and nominee, was already there in London. He too worked for it. At that time he was anti-Gandhian and anti-Congressman.

But as days passed, and after she heard Prime Minister Macdonald, she found that his and King's speech, as far as India was concerned as 'wholly unsatisfactory'. Her confidence in Macdonald sank. Later at the Common Room of the House of Commons, she talked on Indian self-Government, at the annual meeting of the Peace Society, of which she was a vice-President. She predicted a physical revolt in India unless it received speedy redress for its injustices. The GUARDIAN and PIONEER labelled that as 'a foolish speech' while the DAILY EXPRESS called her 'the greatest woman in the world'. 9.

Annie Besant, 82, continued her journey to United States, and that showed how remarkable and powerful was this old lady, when she talked so much, travelled so much around the world in those days and attended to her own work as the International President of the Theosophical Society. The most significant thing that she did in America during her tour in 1929, was to address a letter to President Herbert Hoover of United States, in the name of the Theosophical Society, from Chicago to outlaw war. She wrote that:

> "To the President of United States: We, the fourth World Congress of the Theosophical Society, pray Mr. Hoover, the President of the United States of America, who saw in Europe the devastation wrought by war, and who nobly devoted himself to the relief of its victims, to lead the Nations of the World to the outlaw of war, and to the establishment of arbitration for the decision of the international disputes."

During this long trip overseas, Mrs. Besant was able to collect a good amount of money as President of the Theosophical Society, and every time she used to collect money from different parts of the world from all her friends and admirers. But the gallant old lady spent every penny of those huge amount of collections for her educational and religious institutions in India and one could confidently say that an estimated six to ten millions of rupees must have come to her from abroad which she utilised very generously for the betterment of the Indian people, Indian children and the Harijans who were then called Panchamas. Her birthday message for the year 1929, was addressed to the youth of the world, and she said that:

> "Look forward to a future full of nobler tasks that you may do, that we have left undone, full of greater causes that you may serve, that we have not been able to find, for humanity is ever rising higher and higher when her children serve her generation after generation."

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9. Nethercot- on Annie Besant, Vol. II.

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At this point, it is relevant to refer to the role of the 'Nehrus' who basked under Gandhi's wings, but as already said, Mrs. Besant was responsible for their rise. Motilal was a successful lawyer of the old times although some legends were created about him by the Gandhians to boost their politics. When the country came to know the name of Motilal Nehru he was already a 55-year old man. The circumstance of his becoming the President of the Congress in I919, was already said, and for the second time he became the Congress president in I928. By that time he had already covered a full circle of his political merry-go-round. From Theosophy to Home Rule League and from there to the Allahabad politics and through that to Uthar Pradesh and to the Central Assembly, Motilal reached Gandhi in I918. Together came his son Jawaharlal, and these 'Father, son and the holy Ghost' team, were found between Delhi, Calcutta, Allahabad and Bombay.

Jawaharlal was foisted on the country by Gandhi and father Motilal. Those ignorant and illiterate millions of the country, were told that he was a son of a very rich or fabulously rich man, a lawyer, who made 'a tremedous sacrifice' for the country. That was an impressive introduction. Of course, England was almost the heaven for Indians or the people of the British colonies, and Jawaharlal too had been to England, became a lawyer, and returned. All the same, his academic records are not that impressive as was made known to the country. He was just an average student, failed as a lawyer and dabbled in politics because it was said that he was dreaming to be a politician. His father wrote to him in April I908, that:

> "I do not of course approve of your politics and have on certain occasions expressed myself very strongly, as you know, I can, when I wish it-------."

Jawaharlal tried his hand in the civic elections of Allahabad and failed and then joined his father to play politics. Of course, he wisely omitted all this when he said about others in HIS autobiography. His effort to get into politics was sheer amateurish. It was said that: I0.

> "In I9I2, he attended the Bankipore session of the Congress--------and then toyed with the idea of joining the Servants of Indian Society--------He joined the U.P. Congress in I9I3, but remained inactive. Two years later in I9I5, he joined as Secretary of a fund drive campaign for Indians in South Africa, initiated by Gokhale. In I9I5, in his 27, Jawaharlal made his first public speech-------."

Of course, anyone can see that there are, and there were, numerous youngmen who are very much better than this Jawaharlal, intellectually or otherwise, but those young men and women had no Annie Besant or Gandhi to back them up. A foreign educated man, a barrister, 27, speaking for the first time in public, somehow managed to come up as one of the national leaders in the late I920s. Initially have failed in the bar, Jawaharlal started his politics as a joint secretary of the Allahabad branch of the Home Rule League.

Those active, stormy days of Annie Besant, were nearing an end in I9I9. In those days little was known about political defections. All sorts of deceit and fraud were go-

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I0. Dorothy Norman & Michael Brecher on Jawaharlal Nehru.

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going on in the name of nationalism. When Motilal defected from Annie Besant's group and joined Gandhi who was about to split the Indian National Congress, he took his son with him who had already married and had a daughter, Indira, two years old. With Madan Mohan Malaviya and Ramaswami Iyer, Jawaharlal Nehru went about as one of the secretaries of the Congress, and what he said later on about his politics, was this: II.

> "I was a fire with enthusiasm and wanted to join---------immediately. The idea of law-breaking, jail-going etc excited me--------Finally it was not until the Punjab shhotings and coming of Gandhi, with his 'revolutionary' approach to political action that impelled me to join in the frey."

But all this kind of explanations and versions were the ~~latest~~ after-thoughts. The truth was that if Motilal had not defected to Gandhi's arms, he would not have become a President of the Congress only within six months in 1919. The simple fact was these father and son had known Gandhi right from his South African days. Gandhi was in India since December 1914, but it took them five years to join Gandhi when they thought that Gandhi was 'a rising star' while Annie Besant was almost ~~waning~~ the waning one. It appears that those father and son Nehrus quarrelled very often discussing politics, but the actual fact was that they quarrelled on account of their economic situation. The father was not as rich as Gandhi had told the country while the son was going about without a steady job. Anyway while working as the secretary of the Congress, the son was fed by the public money and father's household.

Prof. Nethercot asked Jawaharlal a few years back as to what was lacking in the politics of Mrs. Besant. He replied that 'she was not revolutionary enough' and then added that her only trouble was that she could not reach the masses because of language difficulty. Gandhi picked up from where she lacked because Gandhi spoke only in Hindi or Gujarati while addressing the people. Jawaharlal also added that he did not like the constitutional agitation of Mrs. Besant.

This kind of talk by the one who came up by sheer luck and by the circumstances of the time, were just meaningless. A close scrutiny of the movements and actions of these father and ~~si~~ son show that they were just the betrayers of the cause and hopes held by Annie Besant. But Jawaharlal bragged that:

> ~~Very often~~ "I saw a great deal of Gandhi. Very often his proposals seemed novel-------but almost always he argued his way to their acceptance."

But then these Nehrus had several other reasons to air before the public. They would say that Jalianwallabagh massacre and the orgy of rioting and firing that took place moved them to become nationalists. That was another much laboured joke. Anyway Motilal said, perhaps, forgetfully, that: I2.

> "I decided to cast my political lot with the Mahatma Gandhi partly in an effort to keep a vigilant eye on my son."

What vigilant eye on a thirty-year old married son. These men were fooling the masses with these excuses, but the actual fact was that he simply betrayed Annie Besant, ran to Gandhi and profited by quickly becoming a President of the Congress with Gandhi being

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II Michael Brecher on J. Nehru- Page 64,
I2. Dorothy Norman and Frank Moraes on Nehru.

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'patron-saint' for these men. Many of those things they said or gossipped with their biographers are just fairy tales. They knew that such tales were sold well in markets through the international traders in books, and these people got royalties.

In the Nagpur session of the Congress in I920, Muhammad Ali Jinnah opposed the resolution on non-cooperation movement, particularly on the demand for the boycott of the law courts, schools, etc. But this sensible move was opposed by the Gandhians who included the Nehrus. Jawaharlal, who had never ~~flourished~~ been able come up well either in his studies and later as a lawyer, and who took delight in dabbling in politics with his father and under Gandhi's wings, welcommed Gandhi's idea of boycotting law courts, and so also many hundreds of pleaders who found in Gandhi's politics a good opportunity to take to the DHOTI cult and thus be called the nationalists and earn an easy money than toiling with all their head and heart for a decent living. From then on, however, Jinnah and Jawaharlal never got on well together, and from I924 onwards Jinnah, the Ali Brothers, Dr. Ansari and other Muslim leaders drifted away from Gandhi's Congress.

Jawaharlal, even in I924, was desperately searching for a job. A 35-year old man had not yet settled in life, and if Gandhi had not gone to his rescue he too would have taken to loincloth. Motilal was not too happy with his wayward son and on whose account he had to defect to Gandhi's side. That old man was irritated all the time. Jawaharlal could not see it any longer, and therefore, helplessly requested Gandhi to fix him up in some job, and Gandhi wrote to him in return that:

> "My dear Jawaharlal, I have your most touching personal letter. You will stand it all bravely, I know. Father is just now in an irritable mood. And I am most anxious that neither you nor I should contribute an iota to the irritation———.
>
> "Shall I try to arrange for some money for you? Why may you not take up remunerative work? After all you must live by the sweat of your brow even though you may be under father's roof. Will you be a correspondent to some newspapers? Or will you take up professorship? Yours Sincerely. Sd) M.K.Gandhi, I5th Sept. I924."

But there was no job forthcoming for Jawaharlal. The employers in any field were as usual clever while selecting their employees, and the unemployed Jawaharlal remained without being employed. A very bad example of a future Congress President and Prime Minister, but that was the way and the calibre of the men who were around Gandhi. In I927 Jawaharlal undertook a tour of Europe and also Russia but who paid him money for such trips, was not clear nor did he say that. Of course, some industrialists like Birla and a few others were always there. Being a self-styled revolutionary, he was, he said, inspired by the Socialist revolution and mass killings in Russia, but these up Indian upstarts were not able to realise that their much admired 'revolutionaries' of the up North would have swallowed the whole of India during their process of expansionism in the last century if the British had not come on time to save the country from those blood-thirsty men after building the northern frontiers firmly along the Himalayan ~~fm~~ snowy fences right from Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Burma to VietNam.

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Gandhi, Jawaharlal and several other men shed a lot of crocodile tears for the Jallianwalla Bagh killings of those law-breakers but they had no tears to shed when their so called revolutionaries of Russia killed some thousands of innocent people who had lived in their traditional lands. They killed mercilessly many thousands of men in the name of revolution and our freeloading politicians hailed those killers as heroes. That's the way of rank hypocrisy of our Gandhi and Gandhians.

At the Madras Congress session of 1927, presided over by Dr. M.A.Ansari, Jawaharlal, just after his return from his European tour, sounded 'a resolution that reflected new ideas.' One of those 'new Ideas' was the 'complete independence' as the goal of the Indian people. But that was not a new idea at all. It was at least ten years old. But the Gandhian politicians bragged such things to boost their 'trade' before the common people who were hired to shout JAI for them in the streets. Every Congress President from Annie Besant in 1917 to Srinivasa Iyangar in 1926, have said about the complete independence but the vast audience as though a large folk of sheep heard being told that they have had a leader who had just toured Europe, seen Russia and inspired by the blood flowing there, and he was right there before them with new labels to the old bottle of spirit of Indian nationalism.

It was said that "even the veteran Annie Besant supported the resolution" on complete independence. There was nothing special in Annie Besant supporting that because it was she who had pioneered the resolution long back in 1915 and 1917, but later on Gandhi, Nehru and their drummer boys and biographers said things as though India took birth when Gandhi and the Nehrus took birth. That was the way most of the sycophants of those days were talking. However, there was a difference among them in the method of securing independence. Motilal became the Congress President for the second time in 1928, and later manouvred and saw that his unemployed son, the admirer of Russian bloodbath and a professional politician, Jawaharlal succeeded him. Later Jawaharlal became the first prime minister of the vivisected India in 1947, but that selection and preference of Gandhi and his cronies did not do anything good to the country. The veteran journalist, Baburao Patel, wrote furiously but justly in his MOTHER INDIA of February 1970, that:

> "For our present misfortunes, we must thank the Nehru family and no one else. The Nehrus, egomaniacs, have proved an undiluted curse to our poor country. The seed of this family curse was first sown in July 1928 when Motilal Nehru, then Congress President, wrote to Gandhi and insisted upon his son, Jawaharlal, succeeding him as the Congress President because Jawaharlal represented 'youth and dynamism'. Gandhi pushed aside Sardar Vallabhbai Patel, the rightful claimant, and crowned Jawaharlal as the President of the Congress. Thus was the tradition of one Nehru succeeding another established to the detriment of democracy in our poor country."

This versatile journalist continued to state that:

> "Democracy got a false start when Gandhi decided to make Pandit Nehru, the first prime minister of India. This dwarf of many inhibitions, who had never known how to earn his own livelihood and who had lived on his father's largess, floundered miserably through seventeen years of one-man rule bringing untold misery into the lives of our 500 millions patient and trusting people. He gave our people an entirely wrong taste of democracy- a taste of Red chillies from China and Russia."

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Gandhi did not see eye to eye with Jawaharlal on many issues and on his socialism. And yet Gandhi foisted him to the country to make him 'a show boy' of the Congress. The old crank called him 'a jewel' and said that his heart was 'crystal clear' and all that only to justify his wrong selection. All these things seemed funny from the beginning to the end. The Lahore Congress session was presided over by Jawaharlal in direct succession to his father. The self-styled socialist, Jawaharlal read his speach, that:

"Comrades, I must frankly confess that I am a Socialist and a republican, and am no believer in kings and princes or in the order which produces the modern kings of industry, who have greater power over the lives and fortunes of men than even kings of old, and whose methods are predatory as were those of the old feudal aristocracy." I3.

This speech was in the order of those speeches 'in the Red Square of Moscow', and Gandhi smiled a little when his protege reading all that stuff, and the old Motilal bent his head filled with pride, at least now and for the first time, as he looked his son being honoured as President of the Congress. But when Jawaharlal declared that he was a Socialist, the people knew the stuff the socialists are made. Baburao Patel had this to say on the so# called self-proclaimed socialist-politicians:

"Nehru's socialism was the child of his frustration. The man failed to earn a living as a lawyer; so he hated every man with money and success". I4.

That was enough for the much boosted Nehru tribe who had never known for hard work and honest living. The old Congress of the good old prestige and honour disappeared with the coming of Gandhi and his band of coteries & his started to confuse issues. They were trying to bluff people that they alone with their DHOTIs and white caps were for full freedom, and not the others, and that was how they dramatised their roles.

Jawaharlal's presidentship was also well-dramatised. Apart from his father trying to push the son ahead with the help of Gandhi, the latter himself had known some such art. It was said that Gandhi's men had been telling him to himself become the President of the Congress for the second time in I929.

"But with his usual humility, combined with shrewdness in always refusing to hold any official position, he rejected the offer saying that he was out of tune with many of the things done by the Congressmen and that his hand was 'too weak' for the job."

It was also said that Gandhi was dieting on cooked food. Therefore#, the world was made known that in his place and with his unstinted approval, Jawaharlal was elected.

But people of India were not that boorish. There were many voices of protest and resentment for the way these older men were trying to play politics to fulfil their own ambitions and self-interests. They found a deep seated ambition on the part of both the Nehrus, and they using Gandhi and vice versa. Many Indian papers expressed doubts over Jawaharlal's selection because of his sympathy to Communism and 'state ownership of everything' as expressed by him many times. Amidst all these scenes of political tom-foolery, Mrs. Annie Besant, then 82, was certainly a disappointed old lady!

I3. D.F.Karaka- on Gandhi, 'Out of Dust'.
I4. Baburao Patel, Editor, Mother India.

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CHAPTER XV.

'AN UNCONSCIOUS BUT REAL VANITY' OF GANDHI.

Mrs. Besant returned to India in October 1929 after a ~~six~~ six-month tour in Europe and America where she relentlessly propagated her views on Dominion Status for India. ~~Though~~ The Indians were ungrateful to her for the services rendered by her to the country, and ~~even~~ some Gandhians even tried to belittle her achievements, the common people very well knew that she was the force behind the Reforms of 1919, and also for the subsequent developments.

At a conference of the Indian National party which was just formed, and held in 1926, Motilal Nehru proposed a Committee to go into, and report on Dr. Annie Besant's Commonwealth of India Bill, but this was turned down by the Gandhians. [1]

As long as Gandhi was there surrounded by Gandhians, they were always turning down all those references to Mrs. Annie Besant and her suggestions. That was, of course, Gandhi's vindictive politics that he had adopted right from 1915. A very poor specimen of leadership and Mahatmaship! In 1929, however, the newspapers wrote that Mrs. Besant 'had been chiefly responsible for creating a new atmosphere of optimism' with her Commonwealth of India Bill. Perhaps, with much reluctance, Gandhi too subscribed to her call for Dominion Status. Despite opposition to her views, Mrs. Besant wrote that:

> "The future of India will, I hope, be united with that of Britain for the sake of both Nations and for the sake of humanity at large, for they ~~must~~ supply each other's defects, and united can do for the world a service that neither can do alone. India in the past has shown that the highest spirituality does not prevent, but ensures, the greatness of achievement--------Under the shelter of her sublime religion she developed a literature of unparallelled intellectual power, philosophical and metaphysical; her art flowered into exquisite beauty, her drama still purify and inspire--------Let her have freedom to develop on her own lines and she will again rival her ancient glory and even excell it in the future. Robbed of liberty she is treading the path of death."
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> "Her salvation lies in SWARAJ, self-rule, Home Rule, and in that alone. Nothing else can preserve and renew her vitality."

This has been the view of Mrs. Besant on the question of Indian independence even from the days before the Congress organization was born in 1885. Long back in 1878, when she was a young spirited woman of 31, she wrote her booklet, 'England, India and Afghanistan', in which she voiced the cause of India and other colonies. That was not an ordinary thing at that time during those days of 'dazzling imperialism'. It could be even said that it was she and Charles Bradlaugh who inspired Sir Octavian Hume and others to start the Congress Organization some years later. After she came to India, she addressed for the first time the Indian National Congress held in 1894, and from that day she had been an ardent champion of India's cause. Thus the case for full freedom for India was made by Annie Besant, Octavian Hume, William Wedderburn and other Europeans long before the modern DHOTI-clad people paraded in the Indian streets as Congressmen. Only thing

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1. Dr. P. Sitaramayya- History of Congress.

that happened after 1920 was that instead of the anglicised leadership there was a change when Indians took over while people began shouting 'Gandhi-ki-Jai'. That noise in the streets was accompanied with some more political 'mock-fights' among the people.

As to the Indian Statutory Commission that was headed by Sir John Simon, it should again be said that it was Mrs. Annie Besant who raised her voice protesting against that first. What she said on that occasion was classical and, indeed, it was from her the Indian leaders, including Gandhi, took a tip and raised their voices of protest. What Mrs. Besant said was as below: 2.

> "What was behind this sudden rush into hurried action?,'she asked. 'It was the fear of the general elections of 1929 in Great Britain. The Simon Commission was not wanted by any party', she said. "All the world will see and the world will remember that Lord Birkenhead was one of those who entered into a treasonable conspiracy, drilling an army and filling a treasury to fight His Majesty's troops in Northern Ireland. And now that a (Statutory) Commission is appointed in which India's immediate destiny is to be fixed and from which Indians are boycotted---------Surely imitation would be the sincerest flattery."

However, amidst all those protests and demonstrations, the Commission had come and gone. Lord Irwin's proclamation on the Government's policy towards Reforms without waiting for the Simon Report was received by the country with mixed feelings. There was a conference at the residence of Vittalbhai Patel, then President of the Central Assembly, and that was called by Motilal Nehru. Mrs. Besant, Gandhi, Sapru, Dr. Ansari, Sen Gupta, Mrs. S. Naidu, Malaviya, Rangaswami Iyangar, Syed Muhammad, Jawaharlal and others were present. They considered the Viceroy's statement on the Reforms, which said that:

> "I am authorised on behalf of His Majesty's government to state clearly that, in their judgment it is implicit in the Declaration of 1917, that the natural issue of India's constitutional programme, as contemplated, is the attainment of the Dominion Status."

Of course, Mrs. Besant, who was an architect of this move was pleased, and so also Sapru and some of her supporters. Muhammad Ali Jinnah wired his approval. The above statement of the Viceroy concluded with the British Government's invitation for Tound Table Conference in London between Indian leaders and the Government representatives on the problem of Constitution.

Sir John Simon, and the secretary of State Wedgewood Benn were for the idea of Round Table conference. Motilal Nehru was against that. Gandhi was non-committal. Jawaharlal was for full independence and then gave a vague threat that he would offer to resign the next presidentship of the Congress. It seems that Gandhi dissuaded him.

At this distance of time, and having known too well both these men, Gandhi and the younger Nehru, one cannot but say that all those things that went on between them was almost a drama. Gandhi, it was said, remained non-committal to the idea of holding Round Table Conference. Here it seemed that Gandhi was feeling sorry that Mrs. Besant's idea of Dominion Status was about to realise, and the upstart Jawaharlal was saying about 'full independence. What is the difference between independence and full independence, between Swarajya

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2. P.Sitaramayya- History of Congress.

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and full Swarajya, and one chair to sit and one full chair to sit? Why those Indians made much of that word 'full' which meant nothing except in the sense of cup full of water and a bottle full of beer. However, the whole thing remained in the method of securing freedom or if one may call it full freedom. Mrs. Besant wanted it to be realised through Dominion Status and that was a wiser step. But Gandhi was non-committal and kept active playing politics by foisting all and sundry as 'national leaders' which in effect was only confusion and wrong leadership from end to end.

This phrase 'full or complete independence' was merely a political catchword in the context it was said, just in order to catch the eyes of the all-ignorant country. Everyone, including the Government of Great Britain was for 'full independence' and not for quarter independence, and that was why as a first step they were about to give reforms in the form of Dominion Status. One thing is becoming clear now and that was those Indian leaders never viewed anything in the national interest. Furthermore, the joke of Jawaharlal saying that he would resign from his newly acquired post of Congress president was just a hoax because that man had never meant that. If he had resigned he would have been nowhere because at that time people didn't know him. He was there because of his father and Gandhi and that was all about him. As prime minister later on, he was administering his hoax of resigning once in every six months or once a year as his so-called threat and all that was only to be glued in his seat of power till his last breath and for seventeen long years! Indeed, a politician like that can never be a nationalist anywhere!

However, of all those people- one in loincloth, some with DHOTI, some with shirts, some with turbans, some with waistcoats and so on, the most ardent patriot who had no axe to grind, was Mrs. Annie Besant. She was certainly pleased with the Viceroy's announcement, and when Lord Irwin was on a trip to Madras, she welcommed him and said that she had worked indirectly in the beginning and directly later on for the Home Rule for fifty-two years, and finally, she said, he (the Viceroy) made it possible.

Every word of this was true. There are voluminous records to prove that it was Annie Besant who began and then struggled to make the history of the freedom movement in India a colourful one. However, why didn't the Indian leaders, especially Gandhi, embrace the opportunity and accept Dominion Status as a first step and work on it for their 'full independence'? At that time Muslim League was not in the lime-light nor was it active in the way it was after 1940. The year 1930 was an appropriate time for the constitutional realization of freedom but it is sad to think that those few emotional and self-styled nationalists were good only in creating commotions and did nothing solid. When the subject came up for discussion with the Viceroy, the country was represented by Gandhi, Jinnah, Sapru, Patel and Motilal Nehru, but some Gandhians, including Jawaharlal, had given them an idea to reject the invitation for Round Table Conference. Those rejectionists wanted 'full freedom'.

At the talk with the Viceroy, Gandhi asked him whether the Round Table Conference in London would proceed on the basis of 'full Dominion Status'. The Viceroy said that he

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he could not answer that, and told them to achieve the Dominion Constitution there in England. But then it was a pity that the Gandhian leadership did not work to achieve that. At the Lahore Congress sessions in 1929, they adopted a resolution calling for full-fledged independence and ~~xxxx~~ seccession from the Empire. This kind of resolution was 'revolutionary' only on paper and that was all the foresight Gandhi had as a politician.

At this point one should think that Gandhi's instinct has always been taking a reactionary trend. He was unwittingly trying to sabotage the most popular programme of Dominion Status for which Mrs. Besant had worked hard. It appears that when the Congress was adopting the resolution on Dominion Status, some Gandhian extremists walked out in protest of that. The NEW INDIA of Mrs. Besant lamented that Gandhi and Motilal Nehru had not had the courage to follow their better instincts. But once again it should be said that the old Motilal who had strongly supported Mrs. Besant was, perhaps, pulled to their side by Gandhi and Jawaharlal, both of whom had begun to admire each other publicly in order to play a big game not only against the idea of dominion status envisaged by Mrs. Besant but also against the Muslim aspirations. It should also be said that Gandhi remained non-committal in the open but did things through Jawaharlal, the so called young Congress President, about whom Mrs. Besant wrote, that:

"Some of us have a soft corner in our hearts for the Congress President though widely differing from him in political and social opinions."

Thus, with the political friendship of Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, and with the old Motilal in ~~the~~ between them to see that they remain that way so that his son could go on with some kind of job, began the political blunder of the century. Gandhi and Jawaharlal openly behaved as though they liked each other but privately tossed ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ letters disagreeing each other. Jawaharlal was a Communist but called himself a Socialist whereas Gandhi and Motilal Nehru did not bother about ~~xxy~~ socialism or any 'ism' but they wanted Jawaharlal to be on their side to keep the Congress as youngmen's organization. But this 'young man' of 40, went about saying that he was a socialist and republican, and in the meantime, the Muslim leaders had drifted away from this gang of the loinclothed Gandhi in which gang they saw only the Hindu communalists. With that the dreams that were held by the elder nationalists like Mrs. Besant, were tottering and Indian politics was just taking a different course that was not much appreciated by the majority of the educated and enlightened Hindus and Muslims. Both Muslims and Hindu Mahasabhaites stood against Gandhian politics which they said, was not in the interest of the country.

Gandhi claimed that he was Gokhale's disciple, but neither Gokhale, Tilak, Tagore nor any of those older nationalists liked Gandhi's politics. Gandhi always took a negative attitude towards the views and principles of Mrs. Besant and other senior leaders of the older days. To make the Indian National Congress 'young' he grinned and praised Jawaharlal whi in turn posed as ~~xxxxxx~~ ever young. His pride and arrogance also came to light. A sworn socialist who had toured Russia and got inspired by the killings there was shouting against the British not to jail people who created law and order problem in the country.

On the whole, both these men, Gandhi and Jawaharlal, had never understood neither nationalism nor the old nationalists like Naoroji, Benerjie, Ranade, Syed Ahmad, Iqbal, Mehta, and several others. If politics is taken just as a profession and a full time job, this is what happens and it happened in the I920s. It is nice to recount here that most heartening note that came in the end of the last century against the Russian type of imperialism, from Sir Badruddin Tyabji, a great jurist and an ex-President of the Congress of the I890s. Sir Tyabji said, that:

> "Gentlemen, if there were to arise, which God forbid, any great struggle between Russia and Great Britain for supremacy in this country- who is more likely to judge better of the two Empires? (hear, hear). Again I say, gentlemen, that in these matters it is the educated natives who are best qualified to judge because it is we who know and are best able to appreciate, for instance the blessings of the right of public meeting, the liberty of action and of speech, and high education which we enjoy under Great Britain, whereas probably under Russia we should have nothing but a haughty and despotic government whose chief glory would consist in vast military organization, aggressipn upon our neighbours and great military exploits."(applause).

Such statements of such lofty idealists and realists should have been heard by the obstinate Gandhi and his arrogant lieutenants, They didn't, and posed as all-knowing and as the I930s dawned, things were going bad. For all that, of course, the ignorant and superstititous millions of the country were also responsible. The leaders breathed their energy, ambition and arrogance from the crowds that surrounded them. While the Hindu leaders spent their days that way, the Muslims found that: 3.

> "Indian National Congress never made a serious effort to understand the Muslim problem. It had no definite policy on the matter and tried to meet each crisis as it arose."

But this sentiment held good in respect of the Congress-men who came to the fore after I920. The Muslim leaders considered those men, including Gandhi, as mere Hindus and not broad-minded Indian nationalists. There were some Muslims in the Congress even after I920 but then it did not help the problem. The vast mass of Muslim population of India had never recognised those Muslims who were in Congress as their leaders. They said that the Congress had fostered a policy of 'divide and rule' by taking away some leading Muslim intellectuals like Azaad, Ansari, Ghaffur Khan, Kidwai and others. The Muslims were saying that the Gandhian Congress "made consistent effort to breach the Muslim front and to take away from the Muslim League as many leaders as it could."

All those Muslim leaders of the past beginning from Sir Syed and Sir Tyabji, had always considered themselves as a nation; they had always thought that they were let down by the British after the mutiny of I857 and later by the Hindus who formed a majority.

Poet Muhammad Iqbal was elected to the Punjab Assembly in I927. In I930 he was made President of the annual session of the All India Muslim League at Allahabad where he delivered an epoch-making address about the final destiny of the Muslim nation in India.

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3. K.K.Aziz- The Making of Pakistan- (I967)

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He described his plan for a separate Muslim State as the solution of the political deadlock between Hindus and Muslims. He was a poet, and as such, expressed his views in poetry. He said, that: 4.

> "I would like to see the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan amalgamated into a single state---------Self-Government within the British Empire or without the British Empire, the formation of a North-West Indian Muslim State appears to me to be the final destiny of the Muslims at least of North-West India."

On the basis of the ideas sought by the old Muslim nationalists like Sir Syed Ahmad, Rahamtulla Syani and others, and on the basis of historic address at Allahabad by Sir Muhammad Iqbal, Muslims considered these men as architects of the State of Pakistan. Iqbal and other Muslim leaders had a good following of the Muslims, despite Gandhi's Hindu-Muslim unity slogan in the country and the Khilaffat movement. 'Muslims first and everything else afterwards', the Muslims shouted. Apart from the Muslims like Abdul Bari, Muhammad Ali, Ajmal Khan and other Gandhian supporters, Maulana ~~Kalam~~ Abdul Kalam Azad too had 'started to preach that the Government of India had trampled the laws of Islam under foot-------And that it was the duty of the Muslims to leave for other countries in which Islam held sway."

All such things happened in the 1920s, but only a few Muslims left, while most of them preferred to stay on in India. In the meantime, Gandhi claimed that he had made it a part of the Congress programme to achieve Hindu-Muslim unity, and declared that freedom would not come till the demon of communalism was removed. But then a Muslim writer said that even Gandhi always spoke of Hindus as 'We' and of Muslims as 'They'. 5.

But this seems a bit too much! Gandhi was a Hindu, and it was but proper that he had to say 'We' when he talked about Hindus, and as 'They' when referring to Muslims, especially when Muslims tried to shout so loudly about their own nationalism. Not only that. Gandhi rightly considered Muslims 'a bunch of converts' and as 'essentially the descenadants of Hindu parents'. But those were the old mistakes of those 'parents' whose sons were more fanatical than rest of the fanatics. Jawaharlal Nehru considered that Muslim issue arose 'on economic reasons'. Iqbal rightly replied, 'No', and said that it was also 'a cultural issue'. The Congressmen tried to politicise such a delicate subject stating that the Hindu and Muslim were no religions and that they were 'different social orders', while Iqbal said, that:

> "We are seventy millions (in the undivided India of 1915) and far more homogenous than any other people in India. Indeed, the Muslims of India are the only Indian people who can fitly be described as a nation in the modern sense of the term."

Things happened this way due to the folly of the Hindu leaders. The Nehru Committee had two Muslims, Sir Ali Imam and Shuaib Querishi and yet this Committe repudiated the status of the Muslim League as a representative body. In every commission or institution, the Muslims felt they were always in a minority. The later Congressmen like Jawaharlal

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4. Hafeez Malik- Muslim Nationalism in India & Pakistan,
5. K. K. Aziz- The Making of Paksitan.

Nehru and Vallabhbai Patel and others behaved like Hindu leaders. Jawaharlal adopted a different attitude towards the Muslim problem. He denied its very existence. There was no such problem as the Muslim problem in India; Communalism was mere propaganda and it 'would not present the slightest difficulty', he said in 1937.

After Iqbal, the next prominent Muslim leader was that ex-Congressman, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who saw the danger of Muslims becoming a minority under Hindu majority. So he put his demand on the basis of Muslim nationalism, and that was how the two-nation theory was born over a dinner table in London in the year 1933. Without it the Pakistan demand would lose its philosophical meaning, said the Muslim leaders.

In contrast to this, the Congressmen continued saying that the Muslim problem was just a myth, and that merited no attention. They also said that the Muslim League was an unrepresentative body which spoke for a minority, and that the Muslims were the converts from Hinduism. The religious nationalism was a relic of primitive barbarism, they said. So this sort of political short-sightedness on the part of the Congress leaders, was the triumph of Muslims in the post-war years of the 1940s.

That was, in short, the Muslim nationalism, and finally their triumph. If the Congress leaders had followed the old Mrs. Besant, what would have been the turn of events? The students of Mrs. Besant's school, are vehement in their argument that there would not have been the vivisection of the country; she would have solved the problem maintaining India under Dominion Status as one country and there would have been no ill-will and blood-shed that happened in the later years. The Congressmen shouting for 'full independence' was a foolhardy thing when even with the independence they got only half the country or three-fourth of it, with a large part in the East as well as in the West, sliced away as parts of a new Muslim country. Mrs. Besant had foreseen this danger and, therefore, she stuck on to her theory of Dominion Status with her Commonwealth of India Bill. She had felt that that the question as regards Muslims in India was both serious and urgent

There is no proof to show that Muslim contemporaries and colleagues of Gandhi had paid the latter any tribute for his services to the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity. Throughout his life Gandhi was influenced only by his Muslim friends and yet there was not a single Muslim to speak good of him. Even Jinnah simply said that he was just a Hindu lawyer; he stuck to that opinion even after he was told that Gandhi caused to give Paksitan Rs. 55 crores, but Jinnah wouldn't budge, so also the rest of the Muslims. In all that Gandhi did in the 1920s, one could see that he was trying to out-do Annie Besant, and in that his opponents found that he was not as sincere as one could estimate his politics despite his going about in loincloth and bare chest.

In that way Annie Besant was far more a realist and sincere than any of the Indian politicians of 1920s and 1930s. Hers was not an illusion; she was not a dreamer; she was down to earth a realist and no hide-and-seek politics in her. Indian politicians were so much jealous after seeing her sincerity that any slightest drawback or mistakes of hers would be made a national issue, and for instance her utterance that 'brickbats

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should be answered by bullets', though quite in order, was said in a wrong time, and the men of Gandhi tried to make her unpopular in the eyes of people. Gandhi seemed to have been quietly enjoying all that and there was no evidence to say that he had asked his people not to ~~make~~ embarrass the old lady. He would not do so because as Nehru had said that he picked up his course of action from the weakpoints of Mrs. Besant Gandhi always took a negative stand and he would always oppose Annie's views, proposals or policies. Very many vacillating decisions that Gandhi took in those days have gone against the interests of the country, and it seemed that this loin-clothed politician considered himself as supreme and not the country. This certainly reads like a very ~~sad~~ deplorable fact.

In contrast to Gandhi's slogan-mongering politics, the efforts of Mrs. Besant to bring Hindus and Muslims together, was hailed by many even before 1920. The hon'ble Sir Syed Nabi handsomely acknowledged it in his tribute to her at the Conference of Indian Muslim League in 1917. He said, that: 6.

> "I shall be untrue to myself, untrue to the Muslim community, untrue to the community at large if I failed at the moment to publicly acknowledge the services rendered by that great and sincere friend of India, Mrs. Annie Besant, who was mainly instrumental in bringing about the spirit of unity between the two great communities. It was she who made that union possible and we cannot be sufficiently grateful to her."

But there was not a single Muslim, including those who had stuck to Gandhi in their own interest, to speak a word in favour of Gandhi's 'Hindu-Muslim unity' politics that was shouted only in streets. After all politicians like Gandhi should have known that things cannot be hidden always and from all people and for all times. If he had been a votary of Truth, he should have known that Truth pertaining to him also would come out one day or the other.

Writing- SHALL INDIA REMAIN A NATION?, Mrs Besant criticised the British stating that they 'had utilised divisions on the principle of 'divide and rule', had petted the Muslims at one time, the Sikhs at another, and often depressed Hindus as the most numerous and, therefore, the most potentially dangerous." Furthermore, she went on to say, that: 7.

> "This undoing of the work of the British rule in unifying India was begun by the Minto-Morley Reforms of 1909--------As the then Secretary of State confessed, parliamentary government in India was not within his vision. He was a democrat in England, standing for equal rights; he was anti-democrat in India, giving advantage to one faith and penalising the other. The result was the intensification of the division between Hindus and Muslims- only in the Indian states did they remain fairly friendly because Hindu and Muslim rulers ignored communal divisions."

Speaking on the 'Place of Islam in Indian Life', at Lawley Hall, Madras in 1929, Mrs. Annie Besant said, that: 8.

> "Islam has a great part to play in Indian life. Muslims were one Nation in their faith. They were all brothers and lived brotherhood, while many other religions taught it, but did not practice it--------At present, the obstacle to Indian freedom was the quarrel between Hindus and Muslims, and it was said that the British alone could hold the scales between the two Faiths--------."

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6. The Theosophist, the Besant Centenary Issue, 1947,
7. The Besant Spirit, Vol. 3, Page 52. 8. The Besant Spirit, Vol. 3, Page 112.

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Thus voiced Mrs. Besant the feelings that had existed then. When the Congressmen tried to ignore the Muslim problem, Mrs. Besant was vocal in her plea that 'Muslims were one Nation', and she held that their problem should be tackled seriously and not in a lighter vein. If Annie had been younger by twenty years at that time, if she had been 60 instead of 80, she would have taken the country with her to Dominion Status, and would have kept the country without being vivisected. The Muslims had trusted a non-Hindu leader and not any Hindu even if he showed up only in loin cloth.

In the meantime, Gandhi was creating some activities to show that he was still around there, and lest the people might forget him. Now in 1930, he prepared for a SATYAGRAHA movement to protest against the salt tax. He conducted a long march from Ahmadabad to the sea coast near a place called Dandi with some hundreds of followers. There he picked some salt as a symbol for the violation of salt tax. On the 2nd March 1930, he wrote a long letter to the Viceroy Lord Irwin demanding full freedom. He also said, that:

"Dear ~~Friend~~ Friend, Before embarking on civil disobedience movement and taking the risk I have dreaded to take all these years, I would fain approach you and find a way out.

"My personal faith is absolutely clear. I cannot intentionally hurt anything that lives, much less fellow human beings, even though they may do the greatest wrong to me and mine. Whilst, therefore, I hold the British rule to be a curse, I do not intend harm to a single Englishman or to any legitimate interest he may have in India.

"-------For according to the science of SATYAGRAHA, the greater the repression and lawlessness on the part of the ruling authority, the greater should be the suffering courted by the victims. Success is the certain result of the suffering of the extremist character, voluntarily undergone. I know the dangers attendant upon the methods adopted by me. But the country is not likely to mistake my meaning------that the only way to conquer violence is through non-violence, pure and undefiled."

That was a strongly worded long letter. Giving an instance for the 'inequities----- maintained in order to carry on a foreign administration, demonstrably the most expensive in the world', Gandhi said to the Viceroy, that:

"Take your own salary. It is over Rs. 21,000 per month, besides many other indirect additions--------You are getting over Rs. 700 per day, against India's average income of less than two annas per day. Thus you are getting much over 5,000 times India's average income. The British prime minister getting only ninety times British average income. On bended knees, I ask you to ponder over this phenomena------- A system that provides for such an arrangement deserves to be summarily scrapped."

This long historic letter concluded saying that: 'It is not ~~extreat~~ in any way ~~extreat~~ intended as a threat but is a sacred and simple duty, preemptory on a civil resister."

The tone of the letter was firm. It was respectful towards the Viceroy as a man. The letter was delivered to the Viceroy through Reginald Reynolds, then ~~stay~~ staying at the ASHRAM, he having had taken to KHADI and Gandhi cap. He travelled from Sabaramati to Delhi. The Viceroy's reply was just an expression of regret that Gandhi proposed to take a course of action which would inevitably bring him in conflict with the law and disturb the public peace. Gandhi replied in stronger terms stating that:

"I repudiate the law and regard it as my sacred duty to break the mournful monotony of the compulsory peace that is choking the heart of the nation."

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This kind of strong words like 'choking the heart of the nation', was only for the purpose of rousing the masses and thus create disturbance which the Viceroy feared, than to tell the Government all that. A politician trying to be in the news would know the trick of his trade. Gandhi's march to Dandi from Ahmadabad was designed to 'overthrow the empire with a pinch of salt'. This sounds extraordinary. Heroic words, as well as dramatic, too!

Robert Payne said that Gandhi had great designs in his plan though it looked like merely a symbolic gesture. Through his pious words like 'conquering violence through non-violence', he seemed to have been deceiving the country saying that all those thousands of people gathered there to march behind him to Dandhi were all pious non-violent Sadhus. Gandhi desired to break the Government machinery and that way he was purely a violent law breaker in loin cloth. He had hoped that all those civil service personnel, lawyers, students and others would all join him in creating chaos and disorder in the country, and with that revolutionary tactics, Gandhi would go on saying that:

> "Our cause is just; our means are strong, and God is with us. There can be no defeat for a SATYAGRAHI."

It is very difficult to digest these kinds of words even though those were uttered sixty years back. Early in the morning of the I2th March I930, a group of 79 men and women led by Gandhi and set out to Dandi to break the law concerning Salt Tax. The youngest volunteer was I6, and the oldest was Gandhi himself, and he was 6I. He carried a thick bamboo, iron tripped staff. As they walked through, the procession swelled out until it was two miles in length, and it became 'the biggest procession there- in the living memory'. Government, of course, watched the whole thing calmly. Srinivasa Sastri had given an estimation of Gandhi to the Viceroy, that:

> "A philosophical anarch who could not be swayed by rational arguments, a man who must be wooed like a capricious woman, and whose dominant characteristic was an unconscious but real vanity."

That was well said! For some days everything about the Salt March went on quietly, and there were no arrests, nothing. But the country was breathlessly waiting for any kind of explosion to take place anywhere. After a march of 24I miles in 24 days, Gandhi and his thousands of marchers, who perhaps thought it was another Ramleela festival and who immensely enjoyed the whole thing without knowing why they were in the crowd, reached Dandi seacoast. 'I want world sympathy in this battle of Right against Might', Gandhi said. He took his ceremonial bath in the sea, and at 8.30 a.m. he solemnly bent down, picked up a small lump of salt, when Mrs. Sarojini Naidu shouted excitedly, 'Hail, Deliverer'. That lump of salt was carefully preserved. There was no police nor any arrests and the people wandered along the sea shore.

Here Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, a former protege of Mrs. Annie Besant, later a defector to Gandhi's group, was the star performer of women's role in 'the drama' enacted by Gandhi's Congress. Mrs. Naidu was always with Gandhi after the latter elevated her to the Congress Presidency. At the Congress meetings, Gandhi's HARTALS, and now in Salt Satyagraha and

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then at the Round Table Conference in London, Mrs. Naidu was there. After all, all plays need women actors also and ~~Sarojini~~ Sarojini played her role well and in the process she had no time for her poetry although it seemed that her poetry was better than her politics.

Here one should see the British statesmanship! They simply played down Gandhi's Salt Satyagraha, except that they told police to watch. They didn't move, made no arrests nothing. Gandhi's men, on the other hand, thought that skies would fall down but the sky didn't fall, and all those people went home terribly humiliated. Many were prepared to go to jail but the British would not feed them in gaols. After experiencing such a disappointment, Gandhi's men set up poor people in streets and school students to create trouble, break law, etc. After a week or so trouble began in some parts of India. Some arrests were made in different parts of the country and it was said that about 60,000 people were arrested, and most of them were hard-core criminals but not actually Gandhi's men.

Of course, the newspapers, most of then nationalist papers, gave great publicity to the event saying that the Salt Satyagaraha had 'a magic effect' on the people who picketed toddy shops, burnt foreign cloth and staged angry demonstrations, but all this was done after a couple of weeks, and those were not spontaneous mass agitations. But then the Government had the usual duty of maintaining the law and order. It was said by Gandhians, that there were 'too many shots and too many arrests' and Gandhian politicians offered themselves to go to jails, But was Gandhi a non-violent man? This is a question that should be looked into thoroughly.

In Gandhi's view, 'SATYAGRAHIs must provoke the Government to still greater suppression'. That's where Gandhi is suspected. He planned 'a raid' of the Government-owned Dharasana Salt Works and take possession of that in the name of the people. Gandhi failed to see violence in such 'raids' but that was a clear revolution of a violent type. He deliberately indulged in this mass movement in spite of his knowing that it would lead to violence. Then why did he speak about non-violence all those years, and to deceive whom, and when every one of his movements ended in brutality and killings?

This is yet another instance for what Tilak, Tagore, Srinivasa Sastri, Jinnah and others said about Gandhi's inner urge to take pleasure in destruction. Lilian Slade, later Mirabehn, described the scene of Dharasana killings and beatings stating that the LATHI blows on the head, stomach, chest and joints were hurled by the police unsparingly on innocent SATYAGRAHIs. The dragging of the wounded by the legs and arms, the throwing of the wounded into thorn hedges and into salt water, the riding of horses over men, the ~~thrusting~~ thrusting of pins and thorns into men's bodies and beating of men even after they had become unconscious, were some of the many kinds of brutalities committed by the police.

But in all this, as such things happen even today and always, one could not throw the entire blame on the police. There was plenty of provocation by the side of the people. Those poor people followed Gandhi literally, who told them 'to provoke the

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people Government to still greater suppression'. What kind of man we see in Gandhi here? He could go to jail and sit and be fed and enjoy the violent outbursts and scenes that he deliberately created as a result of his own actions. He knew all that. He and his close associates simply played on the emotion of the mob that made of poor ignorant people who knew not what they were doing. After Gandhi was jailed, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu who indulged in emotional outburst than in cool logic, was made the leader of the mob, and she too was dragged into the prison. She was followed by Vallabhbai Patel and finally Gandhi's sneakily arranged 'raid' ended, but not quite in success.

Gandhi was put in Yeravada jail in May 1930, and was sentenced to an indeterminate prison term. There were country-wide HARTALS and strikes, and most of the senior Congressmen were arrested. The Government banned the All India Congress Working Committee, and then jailed old Motilal Nehru. Tej Bahadur Sapru and the Poona lawyer Jayakar, initiated some negotiations and volunteered as intermediaries between the Viceroy and Gandhi, and the jailed leaders met in Gandhi's cell in a secret session on how to meet the problem. In England, the Conservative leader, Winston Churchhill said: "The Government of India has imprisoned Gandhi and they have been sitting outside his cell door, begging him to help them out of their difficulties." Robert Payne added, that: 'Gandhi had no intention to help them out of their difficulties'. Thus 'an unbridgeable gulf was created and that existed that way for some time.

What was the reaction of Annie Besant, then 83, to all these developments? Anyone could guess what she had been feeling then! When the Salt March was followed by the usual protests, picketings, demonstrations, etc, she warned: 'Heading Towards Anarchy'. The West Indian Liberal Association issued a statement strongly condemning Gandhi's tactics. Earl Russell remarked, 'What a curious thing it was that Gandhi's non-violence always led to such violence!' Gandhi, of course, in his usual way expressed his regret for what had happened. Mrs. Besant cabled to Wedgewood Benn, the Secretary of State for India, that only thing that could save the situation was his promise that the Round Table Conference would outline a Dominion Status constitution. As to the Congress activities in India, she would say within herself that it was only 'a mock-fight'.

It was in 1930 the name of Annie Besant was suggested at some quarters for the Nobel Peace prize, but it was said that 'her efforts towards world peace through India did not quite come up to the required standard'. 8.

That was correct because her 'efforts to world peace in India' were not viewed with sympathy by the Westerners. If she had struggled so much elsewhere she would have been ranked as foremost fighters for human values and ethics.

The politicians of Liberal school had an All Parties Conference in Delhi, when they tried to unite the Congress programme for 'full' independence. Mrs. Besant was there at the conference along with Tej Bahadur Sapru, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Madan Mohan Malaviya,

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8. Nethercot- on Annie, Vol. II, Page 435.

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Ramaswami Iyer, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu and others. Perhaps, due to her old age, Mrs. Besant could not find her name in the list of the special Committee of 29, 'formed to thrash out the details of the communal troubles and devise a solution'.

Mrs. Besant left for England during the later half of the year 1930. She addressed a meeting of the members of Commons and Lords as well as the public, and her well known objective was to plead for the necessity of granting Dominion Status in order to keep India within the empire. She was also unsparing of Gandhi and his violent non-violence stunts. The report of the Statutory Commission was characterised by her as 'an insult to India'. Along with her, Srinivasa Sastri was one who clamoured for Dominion Status.

When the Government of India banned the Congress Working Committee and clamped all its leaders in prison, Mrs. Besant cabled back from England offering her services to the Congress once more and appealed to all the Liberals to rally round Congress Organization. Vallabhbai Patel replied hoping that her 'bold patriotic stand' would help to unite all factions.

Annie Besant, no doubt, was old. During her stay in London she appeared to have been active and took part in meetings and discussions. But then there was strain, and she was already a disappointed person. She felt, it is said, very bitter at the developments that was taking place. She resigned from the Commonwealth of India League founded by her because she was forced to step down by a resolution passed by the Council of the League declaring that the main terms proposed by the Congress leaders formed a reasonable basis for an agreement with India. This was certainly against her concept of the whole programme for which she was working. Such an idea, she said, would alter the whole purpose of the League in London. She eventually found it impossible to remain in the League.

Here of course one could see the influence of Krishna Menon who was actually brought up and sent to England by Mrs. Annie Besant, but by this time this man had already let the old lady down and also the Theosophical Society to which he was supposed to be loyal! But he insisted on saying that he 'had never had any break with his sponsor', which statement was not true, and the whole country knew him well that he became Jawaharlal Nehru's man and thus had some nice time after Nehru came to power. Mrs. Besant wanted Krishna Menon to get back after his studies and work in India for her Home Rule League but he preferred to remain in London. Menon, like Nehru, was a Socialist, and he found Mrs. Besant too old, and as a mark of his inborn ingratitude, he had nothing to do with her. He said that 'when she walked out of the League, she was old, highly emotional and easily offended'. When asked about the split among the leaders of the League, Krishna Menon played it down saying that it was not so serious. 9.

But what exactly happened was that Annie Besant was let down by her own men and one of them was Krishna Menon. C.P.Ramaswami Iyer said that Krisna Menon had been growing more bitter against England for some time because of the failure of the Labour Party

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9. Nethercot on Annie- Vol. II.

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Government to redeem its promises, and at the end could no longer go along with his sponsor and discoverer (Mrs. Besant) in her insistence that India remain within the Empire.

These things could be political reasons, or excuses in the name of politics, but there are many private and pronounced reasons for this kind of betrayals. Like Jawaharlal Nehru, Krishna Menon too was a rolling stone, and he had never been steady in any profession, according to his biographers. Moreover, Menon would have easily had experiences of being discriminated by the English people both in private and public life. These things happen even today, and fifty years back, anyone could say, things pertaining to that as much worse. Therefore, it is no wonder that people like these quote political reasons as an excuse for their bitterness but behind such facade there would be a lot of untold stories concerning their own frustration.

During her stay in England, Mrs. Besant attended the wedding of her grand-daughter, Sybil Besant, to Commander Lewis, listened to Krishnamurthy as he conducted his camp for 2,000, during several days of drenching rain, presided over the English Theosophical Society at London and the Scotch Convention at Edinburgh and the European convention at Geneva. She spoke at Hamburg also. She would very often, said Nethercot in her biography, 'give expressions to her disappointments in life.' She would say, 'kill out ambition--------but work as those work who have ambition'.

In January 1931, Lord Irwin decided that the time had come to break through the impasse. The Congress leaders were released. A few days later Motilal Nehru died and Gandhi, it was said, was deeply distressed. From then on he relied more on Jawaharlal and with that begam Gandhi's another great blunder.

After a series of talks between the Viceroy and Indian leaders in February 1931, the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was produced. In London Winston Churchill thundered that:

> "It is alarming and also nauseating to Mr. Gandhi, a seditious Middle-Temple lawyer, now posing as Fakir of a type well known in the East, striding half-naked up the steps of the viceregal palace, while he is still organising and conducting a defiant campaign of civil disobedience to parley on equal terms with the representative of king Emperor."

'The rhetoric was devastating', said a Gandhian biographer, and added, 'It had no relationship to anything that was taking place in the Viceroy's study. Sarojini Naidu spoke of a Conference between two Mahatmas (Gandhi and Irwin), and that was closer to the truth.' It was agreed that Gandhi's point of complete independence and on constitutional matters should be discussed at a Round Table Conference in London, and that civil disobedience campaign should be called off, that fines collected from the SATYAGRAHIs should be refunded, and so on. But all that didn't happen that way except that Gandhi was authorised to attend the Round Table Conference in London as the sole representative of the Congress

The Viceroy selected personnel for the Round Table Conference from among the Indian leaders, and in the list Mrs. Besant's name was not there. It was the first time that she had been left out of such an important discussion. Instead of her, they selected her lieutenant, B. Shiva Rao, from her National Home Rule League. Many people have been ex-

expecting to be included as delegates, and that seemed so when found Krishna Menon criticising Shiva Rao stating that the latter 'should not have accepted that' and that was disloyalty to Mrs. Besant. But Menon forgot his own acts of disloyalty to her committed not once but twice, and maybe, many times. However, later on Lord Irwin confided to Lady Emily Luteyns that he had actually placed Annie Besant's name fourth on his list of Indian leaders to be invited, but had dropped it because some of her own friends, fearing that she would refuse a compromise settlement, asked him to delete her name. IO.

On the other hand, Annie Besant told later on that she could have been 'of much use' if she had been one in the Round Table Conference. She was then 84, and those were the months that brought her life 'to its sinking climax'. While in England, she stayed at her flat at St. Ermine's Mansions, St. James. Every day she glaned through her 'dear MORNING POST', because she had disagreed with it the most. Her son Digby Besant came every morning to have a chat with his mother, and 'he and other crowds of friends saw her off at the railway ststion. They knew that they would never meet her again. She quietly leaned back in the window seat of her compartment with a kindly glance at the crowd outside'.

During the last two years of her life, Annie Besant was quiet at home in Adyar, Madras. She visited Benares for the last time. Sri Prakasa saw her, and found her mind failing and unable to walk, and partly blind as well. She managed to deliver the opening lecture at the Benares convention on the 22nd December I930, on the 'Future of Theosophical Society'. Due to her failing health, Warrington, the Vice-President of the Society was summoned from America to take charge of the affairs at Adyar, and from then on she was only the nominal head of the Theosophical Society.

While in Benares, Mrs. Besant gave out some far-sighted ideas concerning Indian affairs and among then these fell under the following items:

i) Approved the idea of 'joint electorates', and of the separation of Burma from India proper;
ii) The failure to agree on the communal issue would prevent the concession of satisfactory constitutional reforms, and added that she expected that eventually linguistic provinces would be formed within India with the Hindi speaking people as one group or unit.
iii) Previously she had suggested that Hindi should become the official vernacular language, (and this idea too like that of her opinion on linguistic states, did not go wrong.);
iv) She expressed dissatisfaction that universal suffrage had been approved rather than graded suffrage based on literacy which constitution had backed. (This idea of hers was very sensible but the Congress-men failed to be sensible and reasonable in that respect. They seemed to have agreed to universal suffrage or adult franchise only to get easy support, rather effortlessly, of men and women, who still do not know or have any basic knowledge of politics or their political leaders.)

When Motilal Nehru died, Mrs. Besant sent tributes to his services. She was pleased by the decision of the British prime minister Macdonald, the secretary of State Wedgewood Benn and Lord Irwin on the release of the imprisoned Congressmen.

IO. Nethercot- on Annie, Vol. II.

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Annie Besant's service in establishing the Scout Movement in India along with Baden-Powell, around the year I920, was significant in many ways, and especially in respect of her enthusiasm to serve the cause of education. As the Scout Commissioner for all India, she presided over the inauguration of the Boy Scouts' Week in Madras in February I93I, and also the all India Humanitarian Conference. On the Scout movement in India, she wrote as early as I92I, that: 10.

"I started with the help of friends an Indian Boy Scounts' Association--------It was modelled on Sir Robert Baden-Powell's famous movement, with the hope that, after the war, it might become part of the Imperial and World organization. It spread rapidly by its inherent worth."

She also added, that:

"Later the then Governor of Madras- becoming very hostile to me as the founder and leader of the Home Rule Movement, started an Organization for Indian boys in opposition to ours, and through the Education department, banned our older Association and favoured his own-------In Madras, by Lord Willingdon's initiative, the two Indian movements had amalgamated into the South Indian Boy Scouts' Association. A Conference was held in Calcutta at the Viceroy's request, so that before Sir Robert came, the way to amalgamation might be smoothened--------.The Scout Promise has always been, that:

"On my honour I promise that I will do my best: To do my duty to God and the King; to help others at all times and, to obey the Scout Law."

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10. The Besant Spirit: Vol. 3, Adyar, Page II9 to I2I.

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CHAPTER XVI.

'A LOYAL FRIEND & A GREAT KARMA YOGINI'.

Two important issues remained unsettled from 1928 to 1933, and those were the problems of Hindu-Muslim unity and that of the Dominion Status for India. The Congressmen of Gandhi's group were trying to be evasive on the question of Dominion Status pointing out to the question like 'the sanction of the people'to back it. Otherwise, they said, 'dominion status can easily become more than independence'. 1.

This is called in simple language- hypocrisy! If Gandhi and his cronies were sincere nationalists and not professional politicians with no other occupation to make a living of their own, then they should have insisted on dominion status and should have strongly supported Mrs. Annie Besant and other senior leaders on the point. They didn't do that. They talked about sanction! What sanction? Where was the sanction of the people for Gandhi's SATYAGRAHA stunts which caused so much bloodshed? Who authorised Gandhi to play politics by way of 'experimenting' all his fancy schemes, and why the cynics of the time did fail to question Gandhi on the point when he launched such irrelevant camapigns against Rowlett Act, Khilaffat agitation and Sat SATYAGRAHA, which resulted in chaos and disorder and even deaths of many people?

Gandhi certainly did not have the sanction behind all that he did except his loincloth and street slogans. The Muslim leaders were distressed by Gandhi's antics. Almost all of his newly recruited lieutenants had personal ambitions, and they were with him to serve themselves and not the country. Moreover, none of those politicians among both Hindus and Muslims, appreciated Gandhi's much publicised spirituality.

Soon after Gandhi showed up in India, from 1915 onwards, the Indian Muslims thoughts that they could Islamise India through him. In those days Gandhi had some hundreds of Muslim friends both in South Africa and India. Most of them were businessmen, and Gandhi was a lawyer, but in India he was a fulltime politician and several Muslim politicians ran to Gandhi for solace. His collaborator in the Khilaffat agitation, Maulana Muhammad Ali, one of the Ali brothers, publicly declared that: 'After the Prophet, I consider it my duty to carry out the commands of Gandhiji.'

But by the year 1925, all those leading Muslims found Gandhi as communal, and their opportunistic friendship or partnership gradually broke down. Even there Gandhi knew his usual tricks. He would betray his Mahatmahood on such occasions, and now he confessed that he had 'lost his hold on both Hindus and Muslims'. Well, that was a joke! No wonder, some Westerners found Gandhi playing politics by hoodwinking the poor impoverished millions of the country and enjoying the publicity he derived out of the modern communication media, especially the press- both in India and abroad.

The Indian Muslims accused Gandhi of 'encouraging majority communalism' in the country. What they meant was that Gandhi, a Hindu, was encouraging Hindus, and not

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1. G.D.Tendulkar on Gandhi, Vol. 2, Page 331.

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Muslims. That was the certificate that he got for his double-standard he had adopted in his politics. Later when Gandhi attended the Round Table Conference in London, it was clear that Gandhi did not represent all India but only the people of his own group of Congress that he had caused to split in 1919.

In the all Parties Conference of August 1928, Tej Bahadur Sapru said that he would join Mrs. Besant in her wish to re-enter the national organization. But Gandhi and his group of half-a-dozen men tried to keep those who were for dominion status out of the Congress, saying that:

"Whether it was the Dominion Status or independence, a proper sanction would be necessary if the national demand was to be enforced."

That was not the correct way to look at things even at that time. By Dominion Status the British control would have been there in part and for some time, and the Gandhians were against that kind of dyarchy. But what ~~xxxxxxx~~alternative they got after eighteen years in 1947, except a mutilated country? That happened that way because of Gandhi's obstinacy and Nehru's opportunism. The Indian Muslims were no longer interested in this kind of politics and they wanted their 'pound of flesh'- the bifurcation of the country and nothing less than that.

The All India Congress Committee met in December 1928 when Mrs. Besant, Gandhi, the two Nehrus, the Ali brothers, M.M.Malaviya, Srinivasa Iyangar, Subhas Bose, Sen Gupta and Rajendra Prasad were there. On this occasion, the Ali brothers strongly opposed the Motilal Nehru report which had failed to consider the Muslim claims. Shaukat Ali declared that he had taken a pledge 'not to participate in any mixed gathering of Hindus and Muslims for one year unless the present atmosphere was changed', and that he would devote his time and energy 'to organize Muslims 'for the service of the country'. 2.

The implications were clear. It was a warning to the Hindu politicians led by Gandhi that Muslim wouldn't participate 'in a mixed gathering' and that they would 'organise Muslims.' The Ali brothers found that they would not be treated fairly by 'the majority communalism'

If that was the stand taken by Muslims, within the Congress itself there was difference of opinion on dominion status. Gandhi moved a resolution on the issue when Srinivasa Iyangar, Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose opposed it. Gandhi then struck a middle course and 'persuaded to enlist support to the Nehru report', but Muslims kept away from that, and from then on the Ali brothers, Jinnah and several other Muslims had nothing to do with the Congress, dominated by Hindus, according to them.

Gandhi's trusted colleague, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, called a ~~xxxx~~ Nationalist Muslim Conference at Allahabad in July 1929, 'to promote the ~~xxxxxxx~~ spirit of nationalsm' among Muslims. That made Gandhi to talk hoarse on Hindu-Muslim unity which neither Hindus nor Muslims wanted. The talk of the Gandhians on 'full independence' too had no meaning in the absence of unity between the two major nationalities within the country.

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2. G.D.Tendulkar on Gandhi- Vol. 2, Page 334,

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In 1930 Gandhi again took to spinning and to propagate Khadi, and that he did when he felt that his efforts failed and felt frustrated. His critics obviously commented on the 'show' that he was putting up, but Gandhi had an answer to that too. He said that he "cannot conceive of Swaraj without Khadi". That didn't mean anything. The intelligentia of the country, especially the Muslims, knew that Gandhi was side-tracking the main issue with that kind of showmanship in politics.

At the conference they had in November 1930, at the house of Vittalbhai Patel in Delhi, the conditions were that 'all discussions at the proposed Round Table conference to be on the basis of full Dominion Status for India; there should be a predominant representation of Congressmen at the conference" and some other minor issues. A list of those conditions were sent to the Viceroy, and it was signed by Gandhi, Mrs. Besant, Malaviya, Motilal Nehru, Sapru and Dr. Ansari. Jawaharlal signed it later on but Subhas Bose and some others didn't sign. 3.

In the meantime, the British Government had recognised the issue of Dominion Status saying that 'the natural issue of India's constitutional progress as contemplated there, is the attainment of Dominion Status."

But the Congressmen bungled. Gandhi was not sure what exactly he wanted. Onee he would support the stand for Dominion Status and once the issue of 'full independence'. He was pulled that side and this side by others around him. It was then he took to spinning and it was then he though of writing that famous letter to the Viceroy describing the economic condition of India, which subject was then out of the point. It was then he planned the 'Salt March' in a spectacular scale. All these things were meant to divert the attention of the people from the main issues of Hindu-Muslim unity and Dominion Status.

The Gandhi-Irwin pact that had just concluded was mainly on the subject of the Round Table Conference that had to be held in London. But the Indian leaders did not put up a united front. There were many groups, if not parties, and they opposed one another. The country, however, invested its faith on Gandhi because the only name that most of the people had heard was that, and Gandhi's going to England ~~with~~ in loincloth and bare chest, was itself a great event and also a spectacle to those Westerners. Such a man going to Europe for the first time after since he had been there last in 1914, made the people of India to think that he would shake up the empire and bring Swaraj right away from there. Indeed, that was how the people, most of whom were boorish and gullible, were made to think in those days, and Gandhi knew that he was entertaining the people that way.

Gandhi had been an object of pressmen wherever he was, and apart from that, he turned out little at the Round Table Conference in England in September 1931. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, Maulana Muhammad Ali and Madam Noham Malaviya were there as participants. Mahadev Desai, Pyrelal, Mirabehn (Lilian Slade), G.D.Birla and Devadas Gandhi were his other companions. To a group of English audience, Gandhi said that he represented "without any fear of contradiction, the dumb, semi-starved millions of the country- India."

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3. G.D.Tendulkar on Gandhi, Vol. 2, Page 381.

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That was all right just to play the role of a Mahatma. But the question was that he represented whom! Did he represent the Indian Muslims? Did he represent the Indian Liberals and the Home Rule Leaguers? Did he represent the princes and several other minority groups? Indeed, whom did Gandhi represent? Perhaps, he represented that wing of the Congress which functioned with himself as supreme master. The old united Congress was no longer there; those princes, those Muslims and those scholarly leaders were no longer there. Mrs. Annie Besant herself was not there.

The rest of what Gandhi did in England was only of newspaper value. He stayed in Kingsley Hall in East London Bow district. He strolled around there early in the mornings and late evenings. Once he said that:

> "I shall strive for a constitution which will release India from all thralldom and patronage and give her, if need be, the right to sin."

Apart from those above named Gandhian delegates to the Round Table Conference, there were at the conference the nominees of the British Government, some Dewans of princely states, titled gentrys, leaders of communal groups and industrialists. But the Conference did not achieve much, and that ended just as the one ended twelve years prior to that at the Albert Hall meeting where the Indian delegates quarrelled among themselves. This Round Table Conference too was just a glorified meeting, and the Britishers watched those Indians snarling at each other.

When Gandhi said about the 'right to sin' to achieve his objectives, it was clear that he would go to any extent to create violent disorder and chaos in the country but with his MANTRA of Truth and Non-ciolence in his lips. It was reported that Gandhi spoke at the conference off hand. 'Like a simple villager, all that I have to say is: 'We want independence', he told his patron G.D.Birla. The after-effect of Gandhi's performance was that 'the British were convinced that he was speaking only for himself and for his group of Congress'. The rest of the delegates returned mumbling and fumbling.

Gandhi talked in sub-committee meetings. He advocated indirect elections, adult suffrage etc. Even on this issue of 'adult suffrage', Gandhi wanted to go against the idea of Mrs. Besant who was for restricted franchise which was more reasonable and sensible even now after thirty-five years of the country's freedom. Gandhi was prepared to let 'the British army remain in India as long as the Indian army is trained'. So it was clear that a 'non-violent' Gandhi who was always inconsistent in what he said or did, was for maintaining a strong army.

In the sub-Committee meetings in London, Gandhi saw that he was attacked by his brother-delegates, 23 from princely states and 64 from the British ruled provinces. It was clear to Gandhi that 'his was a voice speaking in wilderness'. 4.

But then Gandhi showed up as Mahatma in other ways. Although his politics failed him, the country had expected much from him because Gandhi had decided at the Congress

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4. Nethercot on Annie, Vol. 2, and
Robert Payne on Gandhi.

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sessions 'that he alone would carry the banner of Congress and present its policies to the British Government'. With this heroic idea, Gandhi went there surrounded by his sycophants, and in loin cloth and a blanket (due to London cold). A flask of goat's milk contained his food for the entire day. In fact, these were the things that made great news all over India and outside. The newspapers everywhere published all about his movements, utterances and his pictures, and at the conference Gandhi sat amidst the British celebrities and 'everyone there had eyes only for Gandhi'.

That was true, and it was Gandhi who made news by his accentricities. George Bernard Shaw, an old-time colleague of Mrs. Besant, called Gandhi- 'a man born once in thousand years'. From such comments it was clear that Gandhi would not have got such tributes if he had gone there in Western dress as he did in his South African days. Indeed, the full-time politicians know how to woo the masses either in the East or in the West.

Gandhi delivered twelve speeches, some very short, at St. James Place- all without notes. He and other delegates were invited to tea at Buckingham Palace with King George V and Queen Mary. Gandhi wore his torn woollen shawl, mended with Khadi cloth. It was somewhat soiled, so he wore it inside out. The Maharajas attended in their jewelled turbans and rows of medals, but it was Gandhi who was the centre of attention.

At the party one Maharaja whispered to an Englishman sitting by his side and pointing to Gandhi that the man with a torn shawl abd bare feet would be the one who would dislodge them from India. 'George V, the king Emperor of India, was gruff man, not in the best humours'. He had been reading private letters from his Viceroys about 'the little upstart' who was creating so much commotion in India. The king was sorry that Gandhi had organized the boycott of the Prince of Wales in 1921.

> "Why did you boycott my son?", the king asked Gandhi sternly.
> "Not your son, Your Majesty, but the official representative of the British Crown", replied Gandhi.
> "I don't have you stirring up trouble in my empire; my Government won't stand for it,' admonished the Emperor. Gandhi paused and then said:
> "Your Majesty must not expect me to argue that point'. Another version of Gandhi's statement is: 'I don't want to talk politics when I am enjoying your Majesty's hospitality."

With the kind of strong words of His Majesty the king George V, the Government of the British empire scattered all over the world, still fostered a sense of nationalism in their subjects with plenty of scope for freedom of speech, freedom to write, freedom to their subjects to criticise them and freedom to agitate for reforms. All this they had begun in India right from the days of the Viceroys like Lord Lytton, Lord Ripon and others who followed them. The Hunter Commission stressed on the elementary education to all as early as 1880s and their system of law and order made 'no distinction between Europeans and Indians' and their Press Act, in spite of limitations, gave ample scope for freedom of speech, and certainly the British liberalism was behind the formation of the Indian National Associations and later the National Congress right from the 1880s. Almost all the Governors-General, right from the time of Warren Hastings, were constructive builders

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progressive thinkers and outstanding liberals. Like those ~~the~~ earlier British-Indian nationalists- Sir Octavian Hume, William Wedderburn, Mrs. Annie Besant, most of those Viceroys had stressed 'the necessity of partnership and reliance' with the Indian intelligentia and that was how they had conducted the State affairs. Those great prime ministers of England like Palmerston, Disraeli and Gladstone took special interest in seeing the British India flourish not as a colonial empire but as a self-governing country in the days ahead. William Gladstone had this to say in those days:

> "Our ~~first~~ title to be in India depends on a first condition, that our being there is profitable to Indian nations, and on a second condition that we can make them see and understand it to be profitable."

It was in that tradition the Indian nationalism grew up, but within India, and among Indians, upstarts sprang up suddenly to un-do all that the earlier stalwarts had done. When everyone had expected the country to unite and fight, those so-called fighters themselves were seen 'fighting' amongst themselves, and that was how they had shown as delegates in London both in 1919 and 1931. They carried all their prides and prejudices across the seas where the British statesmen seemed to have been enjoying at the sight of these men and women from India quarrelling among themselves.

After the Round Table Conference, and at a meeting held with the Secretary of State, Sir Samuel Hoare, at the India House, he told Gandhi that they could rely on him to push Dominion Status for India as quickly as possible. But in India Gandhi had opposed it just because the idea came from Mrs. Besant. If Maulana Muhammad Ali or Muhammad Shaukat Ali had sponsored the idea, Gandhi would have agreed with them. Gandhi's politics went only to that extent and not beyond. Anyway when Samuel Hoare told Gandhi about the ethics of the scheme, Gandhi agreed, rather reluctantly, saying that it was 'not the whole cake, and it was better than nothing'.

Gandhi paid a visit to G.P.Scott, 85, ex-Editor of THE GUARDIAN. Scott bluntly asked, "Don't you think it is due to the British rule that there is unity in India?"

That was so and history proves it for all times. But Gandhi, a politician and who failed to maintain unity in his own party and in his own group or groups of delegations to the Round Table Conference, blamed someone else for the disunity, and in those days all sins of the Indians were heaped on the British. He said, 'Overwhelming pressure from above had indeed produced unity, but ~~that~~ there were disruptive forces at work threatening that unity as never before.'

Of course, that answer could mean anything. Charles F.Andrews described the Round Table Conference as 'magnificent failure'. After 84 days in Europe, Gandhi returned to India through France, Switzerland and Italy. That was his last visit to Europe and the communication media of the times had greatly facilitated Gandhi and he got a good press abroad.

Through Mirabehn Gandhi and Romain Rolland met. Rolland, who had the impression of Gandhi as another 'Christ', was ill in Geneva at that time. Gandhi had made it a point to see him. After that he travelled to Milan and Rome. Pope Pius XI refused to see

Gandhi, and reasons for this must be interesting but not revealed. The dictator Banito Mussolini sent word to Gandhi and the latter met the Duce at his office. From all accounts it was known that their ten-minute meeting did not go on well. 'The Duce seemed to have been wondering why Gandhi had gone to him, and Gandhi was wondering how any man could be so menacing even when he smiled. They stood poles apart'. Sometime later when Gandhi was asked about Mussolini he answered that 'he looked like a butcher with cat's eyes.' 5.

Gandhi reached Bombay on the 28th December 1931 and he was given a warm welcome. Kasturbaa too was waiting along with the crowd. There were a few hostile demonstrations also by people of the 'depressed classes' or the untouchables- the followers of Dr. B.R. Abedkar.

As soon as Gandhi reached India, he sought a dialogue with the new Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, who was not prepared to receive him. Gandhi insisted on his right of civil disobedience as 'only the natural right of the people', but the Viceroy again did not think so, and as a consequence of that telegraphic conversation between them, Gandhi was arrested on the 4th January 1932. Of course, as usual, there were thousands of people to shout 'Gandhi-ki-jai', and Gandhi became one of those few thousands who were already in jail. Vallabhbai Patel was in the same prison with Gandhi, and he once joked why Gandhi kept on sending complaints to the Government, and then himself answered, that, 'I suppose he does this lest they might think he is a spent force'. The Gandhian biographer commented on that: 'There must have been some truth in it".

But those who knew Gandhi from close quarters might have said that there has been a lot of truth in what Sardar Patel said. While Gandhi was in prison in 1932, he took the problem of Harijans. On the issue of granting separate electorate to Harijans, Gandhi wrote to Sir Samuel Hoare that he would resist to death any attempt to create further divisions within the Hindu community. On the 7th August 1932, the British prime minister, Ramsay Macdonald, handed down the decision which came to be known as the Communal Award, by which the depressed classes were recognised as minority community entitled to a separate electorate. But Gandhi objected to the Award on the grounds of divisions being created in Hinduism, and even hinted that he would go on fast. At that time, Jawaharlal Nehru was in Dehra Dun Jail, and he, like Mrs. Besant, wrote that:

> "I felt angry with him (Gandhi) for his religious and sentimental approach to a political question."

It is difficult to understand the so called 'division of Hinduism' when this 'ism' itself suffered from many thousands of divisions, castes and creeds. What 'division' Gandhi and his sycophants found by the fact that Harijans were classed as minority community? One should say that that was a privilege the Harijans got by the Government. It was a great act of special recognition which the higher caste Hindus had neglected to do for thousands of years. Anyway, Gandhi took that issue to politicise and thus raise a storm over that and then feed his frustration. This was Gandhi's direct reaction for his failure at the Round Table Conference.

5.- Robert Payne on Gandhi.

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Gandhi's sudden dramatization for the sake of Harijans making temple entry of those depressed people, as a cause was taken by the people well because of the cause itself. In those days people were hardly able to read the motives of the politicians including Gandhi because they had been telling people they were 'serving the country'. Anyway temple entry of Harijans was purely a social problem and Government had nothing to do with that. But Gandhi, as Sardar Vallabhbai Patel had said, had to do something lest he would be forgotten by the people who were sentimentally with him because they thought that Gandhi was another god in the god-ridden country.

Gandhi began to fast and that was another deceptive technic of this modern Mahatma. Poet R. Tagore who had bitterly criticised him for his 'destructive' tendencies, now sought to gain some importance by agreeing with Gandhi. 'For the sake of India's unity and social integrity', said the bearded Bengalee, they should avoid further division in Hinduism. That was true, but why should Gandhi fast over the communal award? How and why did Gandhi suddenly switch a political issue into a social one with his pleading for temple entry? Who ~~per~~ prevented the depressed class people from entering temples? Did the British do that? Gandhi should have taken the issue with the Brahmins of the country and fought on it on a social and religious level because the entire caste system was the creation of thousands of years Brahmin manipulations so that they could call themselves as superior race on the earth. Gandhi, Tagore, Nehru and others could have fought that problem on the social level, and that would have been a great service.

But, alas, India didn't have people of selfless service at any time in the past, and that is a bitter truth. Gandhi's politicised fast was quite irrelevant and that seemed like another Khilaffat stunt of Gandhi. It was certainly regrettable to see the man exploiting the British liberalism to play politics to any length knowing well that what he was doing was only to feed his own frustration, and not in the interests of the country.

With this enactment of stunts, the Indian Muslims dubbed Gandhi as a rank communalist. Gandhi could enjoy hearing people in streets shouting 'Hindu-Muslim unity', but if he and his henchmen had been thinking that they were clever in playing politics and without meaning all that they were doing, the Muslims too found themselves as more clever when they realised that Gandhi's politics was both communal and divisive from end to end. Gandhi's talks and sermons did not tally with his actions, and from then on the Indian Muslims began to talk from different platforms that they would not tolerate such humbug of the Hindu Congressmen led by Gandhi and that they would mean business thereafter.

Gandhi's momentary antics became an all India news when he began his fast. The country, it was said, felt agitated because they wouldn't like to ~~mm~~ lose the only 'god' the people then had. Some arrested leaders were brought to Gandhi's cell with Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, an educated Harijan lawyer, representing the Harijans. G.D.Birla, the man who was meeting the expenses of Gandhi, Tej Bahadur Sapru, the Allahabad politician-lawyer,

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C. Rajagopalachari of Madras who joined Gandhi in 1920, Vallabhbai Patel, another Gandhi recruit of 1918, and a few others were there. They talked and arrived at a solution which said that Harijans were welcome to Hindu temples. On the 26th September, a Pact was brought about to that effect and Gandhi ended his fast.

This is the trick that Gandhi played soon after his return from Europe. He provoked Lord Willingdon to get himself arrested, and that was news Number One. Then he dramatically raised the Harijan issue from inside his cell. That was news Number Two. Later he effectively dramatised his tactics on fasting. That was news Number Three. Together with that he brought an unconcerned subject of temple entry of Harijans. That was news Number Four. Then the Congress leaders, Dr. Amedkar and others met, and that was news Number Five, and finally a pact was signed and Harijans were able to enter temples, according to the news Number Six. One should remember here that all these made not only all India news but world news. In that way India had a very durable newsy Mahatma in those days. He played this stunt only to make the country forget his failure of his mission to England where he got neither Dominion Status nor full independence. He did not get it because, as all reports suggest, he did not present his case well.

But if one looked into Gandhi's politics minutely one could say that Gandhi had no case at all to present at the Round Table Conference. He would not talk in favour of Dominion Status because it was not his subject; that was Mrs. Besant's scheme and that was well known. And to talk about 'full independence', there was no scheme at all because SWARAJ was everybody's cry in those days since the days of the Home Rule movement, and because of these reasons Gandhi failed as a delegate.

Now what should Gandhi do? He started a paper from February 1933 and that was called HARIJAN. Initially 10,000 copies were printed, and together with that Gandhi conducted a country-wide tour for the cause of Harijans as well as the HARIJAN, which was then a fortnightly paper. Government was glad that Gandhi found an occupation like that to work for Harijans rather than for SWARAJ. In the month of May 1933, he preferred to go on fast as prompted by his 'inner voice', and that was a fast unto death for the cause of Harijans. This was another game of Gandhi, a purely social and communal issue was dramatised as political to win people's sympathy. Certainly, people were there waiting to get their names published in the papers. The news was that Tagore, Charles Andrews and Romain Rolland telegraphed their sympathy and Rajagopalachari accused Gandhi of claiming infallibility, and for rejecting medical examination. Anyway Gandhi broke his fast on the 29th May, and thus the country was saved from--------what?

Gandhi decided to abandon his Sabaramati Ashram and open a new one, it was said, due to taxation problems. In August 1933, he embarked on another fast unto death due to the Government interference in his civil disobedience movement. In September that year, he was removed from Poona to Wardha, a small village where Vinoba Bhave had founded a tiny Ashram. All this could be called Gandhi's social service, but on the political level, the British themselves had to embark on the constitutional developments which they

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ultimately did. The people's movement in that direction had failed because there was no united front. In every meeting the Indians opposed each other, and Muslims were very vehement in their claim for separation even in I933. There was the poet-politician, Sir Muhammad Iqbal, inspiring Jinnah to prepare for the battle. They and the British knew where the weakness was despite Gandhi who was just a leader of Hindus, ~~and~~ the illiterate mass adored him and the politicians took advantage of the mass following that Gandhi enjoyed and stuck on to him. Anyway Gandhi had nothing special to contribute to the country in the I930s, but only his fasts, tours and such other stunts.

By the beginning of the year I932, Annie Besant had felt that her work in this life was over, that the substance of Home Rule had been conceded by the British, and that only the details remained to be settled among Indians themselves. As for herself, the old lady planned to come back in a Hindu body to continue building up a greater India of the future. She said that she would thus go on being as she had always been, a 'warrior'

From the middle of the year I932, Annie Besant was confined to her room in Adyar without much strength to move about. She was now in her 85th year. In her will she directed that her living quarters be left as far as possible in their present condition on her death, as a sort of shrine and put in the custody of the Outer heads of the Esoteric (or Eastern) Section which was a separate Organization. 6.

The NEW INDIA which was her greatest instrument to carry her message through the length and breadth of the country, 'no longer meant anything to her', and at the end of the year I932, it abruptly carried the announcement that it was ~~in~~ closing down for good. According to the reports, it had never made any money, and it had few subscribers left.

Due to old age, her life long activity, strenous travels all over the Western world almost frequently, and relentless writing, talking and arguing, Mrs. Besant became inactive during the first few months of the year I933, and she became virtually invalid. On the 30th May I933, the STAR OF INDIA of Calcutta, told that Mrs. Besant had lost much strength during the past two months. On the 25th July, the Madras correspondent of the London TIMES carried a brief wireless bulletin that her condition was critical, and on the I9th September, the NEW YORK TIMES carried a message from Madras that her condition was causing grave anxiety. Two days later, it carried almost two columns with a picture telling how this 'loyal friend of India' and 'a great champion of freedom' had died at Adyar on the afternoon of the 20th September I933. The world press carried lengthy obituary note. The London TIMES, wrote about her on the 2Ist September I933, that:

> "Not many years ago the death of Mrs. Besant, the President of Theosophical Society, would have been an event of importance in Indian politics, the chief field of her agitation and propaganda. There her influence had waned, but she remained the spiritual leader of numbers of people all over the world. Throughout her varied career may be discerned a firm resolve to be the controlling force of political, which she chose to adopt. She possessed eloquence of a most exceptional kind, with organizing ability and no slight literary talent, shown in her numerous books and pamphlets."

Continuing, THE TIMES, said that:

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6. Nethercot On Annie, Vol. 2, Page 445.

"Her vigour of mind was extraordinary. She was accustomed to rise at 4 a.m. and to keep her intellectual powers on the stretch until late at night with little or no intermission while her diet was scanty and strictly vegetarian. At an advanced age she did not hesitate to take long journey by air both in India and abroad. In the last four-five years, however, she had ceased to play an active part in public affairs and spent her last days in retirement at Adyar-------."

THE HINDU of Madras, which was once her bitter critic, observed that:

In the death of Mrs. Annie Besant, India had lost a loyal friend and the world a great KARMA YOGINI."

The rest of the newspapers too paid glowing tributes to her life-long services and sacrifices for the cause of India and of the world, and many of the papers, both in India and England, wrote for many days about her life and activities.

The messages of condolences and tributes to her memory, poured from all parts of the world. Gandhi 'immediately sent a dispatch of sorrow and praise' for her outstanding personality and services. George Lansbury, Viceroy Lord Willingdon, Esther Bright, former secretary of State for India Wedgewood Benn, Sir P.S.Sivaswami Iyer, Rangswami Iyangar, Subhaschandra Bose from Geneva, G. Krishnamurthy from Germany, and several others sent messages of grief and sorrow at the passing away of Annie Besant.

Sri Prakasa, son of Dr. Bhagawan Das, was at a meeting of the local Congress in Lucknow when he heard the news. "We owe much to her", he said, "we owe much to her", he repeated. Jawaharlal Nehru who grew up under her shadow, behaved like a politician, and 'in a politician's mood launched into a long tribute to her' at the same meeting in Lucknow. For Annie Willson, the strain was too much, and she lost her memory, and died saying 'I have known Annie Besant. I have known Annie Besant'. Dr. Bhagawan Das too broke down and wept when he heard the news. 7.

Tributes from all parts of the world continued to pour in. In Simla, legislators of the Central Assembly paid glowing tributes for her services to India, and so also many of the provincial legislatures and corporations. The Benares Hindu University which owed its existence due to her benevolence and generousity closed its classes, and the University road which was to have been named after Dr. Bhagavan Das, was named, on his request, as Annie Besant Road. Her statues were unveiled in some cities including the one in Bombay. The Bombay Corporation adjourned; and the stock exchange in Bombay closed for a day. In Calcutta and some other cities people gathered in thousands to eulogise her services and, in Madras, her statue in the Marine Drive Park 'now stands gazing out over the Bay', in addition to those busts of hers at Adyar and Y.M.I.A., Gokhale Hall, Madras.

Indians did all this to a foreign citizen, and no foreigner in the living memory had been so much in the hearts of millions than Annie Besant. Those who had known her intimately simply wept when they heard of her death. She was more than any Indian in her Indian nationality, and was a true and dedicated Hindu than any other Hindu who was so by sheer accident of his or her birth. Annie's activities and services had extended a

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7. Nethercot- on Annie, Vol. 2,

a very wide field and throughout the civilized world in both the hemispheres. In religion she was a YOGINI, in politics she was an uncrowned empress, in theosophy she was a world messenger, as a social reformer she was a Joan, Nightingale, Gargi and Jhansi- all in one- imbued with flair, emotion, sincerity, grace, humanism and talent for fighting. Her life was long and purposeful, her achievements were numerous and magnanimous, her personality was dynamic and magnificent, her character- pure and generous, and as an orator and writer she was illuminating as well as inspiring. She was world renowned even in those days when there was utter lack of publicity media, and was admired by all those who had known and heard of her and her activities.

There were tributes for her from all over, some of which were very much heartfelt and profound in sentiments. It is significant to note what Muhammad Ali Jinnah, later the creator of Pakistan, said about her. He said that:

> "No other person has worked and served our cause with that singleness of purpose, devotion and transparent sincerity as has Mrs. Besant. She has sacrificed all she could--------for the freedom of India."

Almost all her intimate associates and great public figures of the time have testified to her goodness and her lofty private, public and political character in splendid terms. Sir C.P.Ramaswami Iyer, her adversary in the court of law ~~and~~ as a lawyer in I9I3-I4, and later her colleague in the Home Rule League, said that in spite of all disappointments that she had experienced at the hands of those to whom she worked wholeheartedly, in her last years 'between I928 and I933 when he saw much of her, he never noticed a bitter expression on her face or heard a vengeful word from her lips. She simply said, 'These are times through which I must pass'.

Another stalwart of the time, Rt.hon'ble Srinivasa Sastri, took a similar point when he wrote in the Mrs. Besant centenary volume: He said that:

> "Mrs. Besant was many personalities combined in one, and that every one of these personalities was a power for good. He emphasised that he never heard her speak ill of any of her associates, even the worst of those who had fallen away from her and treated her badly....."

Theosophist Theodre Besterman testified that she was a person 'of quite exceptionable ability'. George Arundale saw in her the personification of Truth Incarnate. Never did she compromise with truth, never did she tell even a white lie. He said that "her greatness could not be measured in terms of the standards by which ordinary greatness is measured. 8.

The poetess Sarojini Naidu in her telegraphic message said that:

> "In token of love and homage to her whose radiant spirit rekindled India's faith in her own ideals and destiny."

Almost everyone of her generation ~~said~~ expressed the same sentiments and said that "she awakened Indians to a sense of their dignity, their heritage, their destiny." Dr.Alam, an esteemed Muslim, called her the 'mother of Mother India'. 9.

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8. Nethercot- on Annie, Vol. 2.
9. The Theosophist- October I933.

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But Gandhi's message summed up of what most of the people had said in different words about Annie Besant. Gandhi said, that:

"Whilst the people will thank the Almighty for relieving Dr. Annie Besant from lingering illness by sending to her the Angel of Death, thousands will at the same time mourn the event. As long as India lives, the memory of the magnificent services rendered by her will also live. She endeared herself to India by making it her country of adoption and dedicating her all to it."

But the most brilliant and the most authenticated and the most sincere tribute came from C.P.Ramaswami Iyer who was Annie's comrade in arms. Everyone in India knew of the 'collaboration in political work which existed between Dr. Annie Besant and the brilliant Madras lawyer, Ramaswami Iyer. It was a collaboration that none could have forecasted, for in the famous 'Alcyone' case (connected to young Krishnamurthi and his brother Nityanand), Mr. Iyer was the counsel who opposed her, using all his forensic ability to prove his case right, and hers wrong. His tribute was as under: IO.

"In the history of freedom, hers will be one of the most prominent figures of the last one-hundred years. Apart from her monumental labours in England in the cause of the oppressed and downtrodden and for the vindication of the rights of labour and of women, her contribution to the political history of India is unmatched. She sacrificed not only her material resources but dedicated her energies to the cause of Indian education and Indian political uplift. No other single person has done more to arouse the instinct of self-respect in India than she, and in her originated the idea of transforming Indian politics from the pastime of the leisured few into the preoccupation of the man in the village. It was my privilege to have been closely associated with her in the political sphere after having opposed her in a historic case, and no one can bear more intimate testimony to her unrivalled chivalry and faculty for organization and tean work than myself. May her soul rest in peace!"

'Why did Annie Besant become 'the Mother of Mother India?' The answer to this was that long back in I88I, a great Adept called 'Mahachohan' uttered these words, and those were, that: II.

"Oh, for the noble and unselfish man to help us effectively in India in that divine task; All our knowledge, past and present, would not be sufficient to repay him."

"No man responded, but a WOMAN did. That's why Their wisdom was lavished upon her, and the Shield of the Highest on our Earth was as an oriflamme in front of her, and His Star ever shone before her eyes to give her comfort in defeat, and decision when her wisdom seemed inadequate. Of FEAR, there was not one particle in her; that was why when He gave her 'marching orders' about her political work in India, and foretold the excesses of the masses which might result from awakening them, He said to her: "I need not say 'have no fear'; but have no anxiety".

In one of her books, Mrs. Besant wrote that: I2.

"My own life in India, since I came to it in I893 to make it my home, has been devoted to one purpose, to give back to India her ancient Freedom-------."

Col. Olcott, the founder-President of the Theosophical Society, in his very first lecture in Bombay, on the 23rd March I879, made an appeal to the sentiment of patriotic loyalty'to the memory of their forefathers to stand by the old religions.' It was significant, Mrs. Annie Besant wrote, that: I3.

IO. The Theosophist- journal- October I933.
II. " " " I933,
I2. India- Bond or Free- by Mrs, Besant, Page 26.
I3. " " " " " " 27.

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~~significant~~

"That after the Theosophical convention at Adyar in I884, a number of delegates and members went over to Madras and formed the organizing Committee of the National Congress-to-be, which met in Bombay in I885, and became the voice of India; the national self-respect aroused by ~~the~~ revived pride in Hinduism, leading to the National ideal of self-Government."

Sir Valentine Chirol wrote a more realistic view about the Indian nationalism in his book, and exhorted that: I4.

"The advent of the Theosophists,heralded by Madame Blavatsky and Col. Olcott, gave a fresh impulse to the revival, and certainly no Hindu has done so much to organise and consolidate the movement as Mrs. Annie Besant who, in her Central Hindu College at Benares, and her Theosophical institution at Adyar, has openly proclaimed her faith in the superiority of the whole Hindu system to the vaunted civilization of the West."

He also added that:

"Already Col. Henry Olcott had changed the face of Ceylon (now,Sri Lanka) by making education the handmaid of Buddhism, and covering the Island with numerous village schools in which the children learned their ancestral faith. Zorarstrians too had their own schools--------."

Col. H. Olcott, in that way could be said as a pioneer in the work of the uplift of the Harijans or the PANCHAMAs. He established his first school for Harijans in Madras in I894, and then started five more schools at different localities around Madras.

Service to the depressed and the less fortunate was the motto of the Theosophists, and Annie Besant had accepted the principle in all her life- 'There is no religion higher than Truth'. The older generation of India remembered much about her, and every book that is written about the affairs of India of the first quarter of this century would not go without a reference to Annie's great contribution to the cause of India's freedom, education and social and cultural revival. 'None of her closest associates, either in England or India, either the Theosophists or or of other religions, questioned her sincerity', said her biographer,Nethercot. Quoting Krishna Menon, he said that: I5.

"Those who knew both Mrs. Besant and Gandhi, said that they were of incompatible tempers, but they had an essential respect and admiration for one another, In certain matters such as 'Brickbats Vs. bullets' and civil disobedience, he confessed, she had proved right, and he voluntarily added that the experience of the present Government had shown that she was correct in emphasising the necessity of maintaining law and order by an responsible Government. Even in her ideas on a British Commonwealth of Nations, current history has proved that she was right. Though many Indians had resented her pretensions to Hinduism, her fondness for making a dramatic entry, and the richness of her clothes and jewellery, they admired her indomitableness up to the very end of her life, and were beginning to realise more clearly and impartially what she had done for the nation."

Gandhi too, who must have had pretensions to sainthood, to truth and non-violence etc, was touring the country. Mrs. Besant during her full forty years' stay in India making India her home, went on tour over Europe, Australia, America, etc at least fifteen times, and her 'world' was as vast as that even in those days, while Gandhi, after his return from South Africa, and from I9I4 to I948, left India only once in I93I and that visit to Europe was a failure. He was not treated well by the king George V, Benito Mussolini, and others and the Pope 'refused to see him'. Well, that was it!

I4. Sir. V.Chirol- 'Indian Unrest'- Page 28,
I5. Nethercot- on Annie, Page 466.

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People blabbered about the 'pretensions to Hinduism' of Annie Besant or others, but they forgot their own pretensions in a thousand ways to DHARMA, SATYA, AHIMSA and so on. That was why India failed to discover itself and foreigners had to come and do that for them. But then Gandhi knew the trick to create Gandhi-mania, and Gandhians had a momentary satisfaction from all that but the country suffered in many ways. A Gandhi could flourish only in a liberal set up of the British system of Government and nowhere else, and Gandhi and his henchmen took full advantage of that to create law and order problem in the name of fighting for the freedom of the country. But that didn't do any good either to the country or to Gandhi himself, or to his reputation, much of what was artificially built up with the help of the media as all politicians always do.

Gokhale, whom Gandhi called his Guru, was the first to doubt the validity of Gandhi's methods. Lokmanya Tilak, who was called the 'Father of the Indian unrest', though this is a wrong epithet because there were other 'fathers of unrest' before him, had opposed Gandhi's views and methods. Together with those two, there were Tagore, Sastri, Jinnah and the rest of the Muslim leaders who kept away from Gandhi. Mrs. Besant did not have any disagreement with Gandhi till 1917 although the Benares incident of 1915 created by Gandhi had given her sufficient headache. Later when she came to know him well and from close quarters, she was greatly disappointed. All these persons realised that Gandhi was playing a politics of vanity and self-aggrandizement after making use of the weaknesses of Mrs. Besant, as J. Nehru testified later on. The efforts of Mrs. Besant and others to support the 1919 Reforms of Edwin Montague, was sabotaged by Gandhi after creating unnecessary street scenes through his Rowlett Act agitations. One could now say, and confidently too, that SWARAJ would have come in a better way and without so much bloodshed, bitterness, and partition of the country, if Gandhi had not been there. This is a regrettable fact about Gandhi!

As already said, Gandhi found himself incapable of working with senior leaders, launched his own Satyagraha stunts at Champaran, Kaira and other places to get himself known by the country, split the Congress in 1919, formed his own group, launched the Khilaffat movement to woo the Muslims and so on. Gandhi's long list of egomaniac politics, kept away from him the real nationalists and the intelligentia of the country. People called him a Mahatma because they didn't know what he was doing and the motives for his so called movements. Gandhi was nothing if he was not stubborn and egomaniac. That was yet another deplorable fact about Gandhi.

As to the other men who had defected to Gandhi's group, like Motilal Nehru, and Chittaranjan Das, were described as sheer opportunists. Bal Gangadhar Tilak cynically remarked about their activities, that: I6.

> "These lawyers will rue the day they took up an extreme position to defeat my resolution (at the Amritasar Congress in 1919). They will retrace their steps one day, but by then Gandhi would have grown too powerful for them."

I6. Durga Das- India- from Curzon to Nehru.

Indeed, that was what happened. Tilak was quite right in his estimation. Muhammad Ali Jinnah too talked in the same vein. He refused to do anything with the 'pseudo-religious approach in politics' and then parted company with Gandhi's Congress since the Nagpur session of 1920. Jinnah said, that:

"I do not believe in working up mob hysteria. Politics is a gentleman's game".

That was another description of Gandhi as an ungentlemanly politician, but Gandhi was thinking why he should not go about in loin cloth, a more powerful way to 'work up mob hysteria'. Well, he didn't wait too long to show himself that way, and from then on there was no constitutional agitation, no rule of law, nothing. All politics of Gandhi went on in the Indian streets with the mobs shouting Gandhi-ki-jai. Their cries became louder as Gandhi literally took to loin cloth.

Jinnah strongly supported Mrs. Besant in her stand for constitutional agitation. He even deplored Khilaffat movement which, he said, brought the reactionary Mullah element to the surface. Jinnah agreed with Mrs. Besant and Tilak who brought about the Lucknow Pact but now he was at a loss to know that: I7.

> "The Hindu leaders had not realised that this Khilaffat movement would only encourage the pan-Islamic sentiment that the Sultan of Turkey was encouraging to buttress his tottering empire, and dilute the nationalism of the Indian Muslim."

Thus the whole thing appeared as though Gandhi had made a wrong start. The freedom of the country became a reality because of international causes and circumstances without these Gandhi, Nehru or anyone knowing that freedom had been knocking the door. But it didn't come in the way the country had expected. The British built united India was cut into two and there again history would say that Gandhi and Nehru were the guilty men for the entire mess. Which Nehru was that? I8.

> "Motilal Nehru riled by his son's indifferences to the practice of law, said he must fend for himself and not enjoy carefree life on his father's money."

But for the son, Jawaharlal, if not his father's money, Gandhi's patronage was there, and the latter tried hard to put him in some job. That didn't work out because Jawaharlal had already become a 'spoilt child' as well as a 'show boy' of the Congress, almost like one of his grandsons, and continued dabbling in politics but under Gandhi's wings. So the older men had no alternative but foist Jawaharlal on the country, and from then on it was their day till Hitler emerged in Europe to change the destinies of the nations.

I7. Durga Das- India- from Curzon to Nehru.
I8. " " " " " "

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CHAPTER XVII.

GANDHI'S 'CHILDISH INSANTITIES & OBSTINACIES'.

Here it is relevant to look at Annie Besant's career, her personality and her work for India's freedom. How did Gandhi manage to rise up when Annie was still active? Was ie because of her being already 73 years old in 1920? Was it because she was an European? Was it because of Gandhi's South African record? Or, was it because of his pretenses to Truth and Non-violence, and for his going about in loin cloth? Indeed, what was it due to?

The simple answer to this is that Indians were in need of their own man as a national leader and not foreigners who have been there as guiding spirits for well over forty years from 1880. Indians, however, admired the 'lady in white and in saree' but they wanted one like Gandhi who knew the trick to attract the attention of the people. Gandhi started politicking from the points where Mrs. Besant lacked. He began talking in Indian languages, he kept on saying that Gokhale was his GURU, and harped on words like SATYA, SATYAGRAHA, AHIMSA and so on. N. Sri Ram, a former President of International Theosophical Society, explained in 1954, that: I.

> "The decline of people's gratefulness to Mrs. Besant was due to her conflict with Gandhi, and to the fact that Indians preferred their independence through one of themselves rather than through a white person- no matter how much they admired her even though her policy was the one which was truly pacifistic, like the one which Gandhi was preaching but not practising. But psterity has not seen fit to leave the matter here."

Sri Prakasa, another close follower of Mrs. Besant, a former ambassador, Governor, etc, praised her as a lady of ideals and inspiration. He said, that:

> "She was really more Hindu than Gandhi, whose great heroes were of the Western world, like Tolstoy, Thoreau, Newman and Christ, while Annie knew the sacred Hindu books by heart and constantly reminded her hearers and readers of them. Yet at the same time, she had never become completely at home as an Indian--------She was patient and evolutionary; Gandhi was swift and revolutionary."

On Bishop Leadbeater's influence over Mrs. Besant concerning occultism, there was criticism, and Gandhi, Martin Boyken of German Theosophical Society and Frank Spicker of New York had referred to that critically, but everyone had admired Annie's chastity and purity of mind and to her lofty character. She was criticised for her 'neo-Theosophy' that differed from that of Mme. Blavatsky. Annie's stages of development began from her Anglican phase with her clergyman husband, through the theistic phase with Voysey, Conway and Scott, through the atheistic phase with Charles Bradlaugh, the scientific phase with Aveling, the Socialistic phase with Bernard Shaw, the social reform phase with Herbert Burrows, the theosophical phase with W. Judge, to the occult phase with Leadbeater- 'in all of which there had been some sort of sexual attraction involved'. This was what her colleague B.P.Wadia called her 'psycho-mental case', as show worked all through her life in association of men as comrades in arms.

I. Nethercot- on Annie Besant, Vol. 2, Page 462.

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However, when a woman like Annie Besant becomes a ~~di~~ dominant character, she has to go through many people. The on-lookers might find 'psycho-mental case' in a woman of that dynamism and intellect. The petty human weaknesses in such circumstances are inescapable and in that Gandhi too was no exception. It is the will to conquer the 'psycho-mental' weaknesses that counts, and makes one great. In that way, as certified by several of her associates both in India and Europe, Annie Besant had out-beaten everyone else of her time in purity, chastity and integrity.

In her political opinions and idealogies, Annie Besant had no need to be a hypocrite or opportunist. She had fervently believed that she had a duty to perform in India, and at that she devoted all her time and energy. Her refusal to include full adult franchise or suffrage in her draft Constitution had made many Indians oppose her, but, said Benegal Shivarao that: 'Some in the Government today doubted whether illiterates should be allowed to vote in national elections'. Jawaharlal Nehru who enjoyed much from this kind of adult franchise, doubted the efficacy of the system that allowed illiterate millions to vote. Annie's political knowledge, idealogy and foresight have been extraordinary. C. Rajagopalachari, a shrewd and silent observer of her activities from close quarters, wrote in the Besant Centenary Volume, that: 2.

> "As a young man, I had kept ~~away~~ somewhat away from Mrs. Annie Besant's activities, but now I have realised with a larger perspective, how great a person she really was, how foolish all the attacks on her and the Theosophical Society had been, and how much she had been misunderstood."

Talking to Annie's biographer in 1956, Rajagopalachari continued his self-castigation for his blind error of youthful judgment. He spoke of the various ~~error~~ phases of the struggle for freedom and stressed that'Dr. Annie Besant had dared to differ boldly from Gandhi on the efficacy of mass non-cooperation coupled with disobedience of laws. He pointed out that Annie had foreseen how these methods would leave a heritage of disrespect of law and how prophetic her words had proved at the present 'when people talk in terms of breaking the law and offering hunger strikes and Satyagraha for everything."

C.Rajagopalachari, a long time henchman of Gandhi, who plunged into politics in his forties just to carve a career in that field, was one with the rest of the Madras Brahmins who were critical of poor Annie Besant. Now after thirty-five years in 1956, he came to his senses to tell the truth and 'gave full credit for Mrs. Besant for being the real beginner of the Home Rule movement'and told Annie's biographer Nethercot, how her movement captured the imagination of every Indian patriot. He said how Gandhi had many times sent men to her asking her to support him, and admitting his own mistakes.

C. Rajagopalachari had also questioned the wisdom of Mrs. Besant's opinion that free India should remain an equal partner in the British Commonwealth. All this showed very poor political acumen of the so-called leaders of the time. Anyway later when everything was done as Annie had visualised, he admitted that:

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2. Nethercot- on Annie Besant, Vol. II, & an Interview with Rajagopalachari.

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"It is right and logical to remain in the Commonwealth, considering the fact that the movement for world unity is overtaking the movement for national independence."

Dr. S.Radhakrishna, the ex-President of India, said that Mrs. Besant's most important contribution was her initial arousing of India's pride in her past culture, traditions and history. He valued her making people happy and to hold up their heads again when Indian art, literature, music, religion and social institutions were compared with those of the West. He also recognised the greatness of her personality and the value of her contribution to India's freedom.

Jawaharlal Nehru said in 1956, that:

"To the younger generation of today, Mrs. Besant might be just a name, but to his generation and the one before that, she was a tremedouns figure. Not only had she played a conspicuous role in India's fight for freedom, but she was one of those early persons 'who drew our attention to our own heritage, and made us feel proud of it."

Nehru continued to say that, he, as might be expected, "was not willing to admit that perhaps her methods would have proved preferable to Gandhi's." Yes, Nehru 'was not willing to admit' because he had to justify himself for having stuck to Gandhi to make his political career go on smoothly, nor would he admit that both his father and himself were defectors from Annie's group and followed a new 'rising star'. However, Nehru's final impression of Mrs. Besant was that she 'was the most magnificent lady' he had ever met.

Whereas in respect of Gandhi too, one could find in him some positive points as a man though not as a politician. His main achievement was his being a moderating factor in Indian politics, but his basic as well as unforgivable defect was that he was dictatorial. 'If you choose to follow my lead, you must accept my conditions', said Gandhi to his men. No doubt he trained his followers to be ideal SATYAGRAHIs, which they were, and beyond that he had no control over the mob or the intelligentia of the country. Most of his civil disobedience movements were politically unwarranted, and those would invariably end in violence, and so did his fasts which were just the coercive tactics and stunts, and nothing more.

Gandhi had no clear-cut view of the things for which he was fighting, and very often most of his subjects and schemes in which he took a fancy to dabble in became controversial, and so did his politics. He was good in raising storm through the country-wide agitations as against Rowlett Bill, the Khilafat movement, Salt Satyagraha or the Communal Awa rd of 1931. In the Round Table Conference he found himself ~~as~~ outmanouvred by his fellow delegated who had differed from him.

Living in the 20th-century world of industrial and mechanical progress, Gandhi posed as an ascetic but active in politics, made a show of discording modernism in favour of medievalism, masochism etc etc. The 'Inside-man' John Gunther said, that:

"Not one in India knew precisely, beyond shadow of doubt, where the Mahatma draws the line between his 'dominion Status' and 'Independence'. He seldom defined his terms."

It was because of this, perhaps, Gandhi lost to the more out-spoken and progressive elements in Tripura Congress sessions and to Subhaschandra Bose, ~~and~~ Gandhi had to admit his nominee's

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defeat as his own. Anyway as though to silence these men, war in Europe began, and the Congress-ruled provincial Governments resigned stating that they would not support the British in their war against Germany. Here too Gandhi stumbled and fumbled by his un-Gandhian stand of using the others' difficulty for his or their own opportunity.

In that way he was always uncertain of what he had intended to do or in his views, but he would argue out his ways as a lawyer, which he rightly was, to suit his views. But the British did not care a hoot for the Congressmen despite the 'Quit India' movement of Gandhi in 1942. They said that they would see India freed after the war, but the Congressmen would not believe that, and they were in a great hurry to see the British quit because they were hungry.

There was a reason for their 'hunger' because some of them had tasted power in a restricted way during 1937-39. But what the British found in them during those short two years, was that these Indians could be more dictatorial than Gandhi, more autocratic than a medieval Sultan and more power-hungry than any hungry wolves. No wonder, they craved for freedom to quench their thirst and not to serve anyone but themselves. Otherwise there was no reason why they could not have wait for some time and why they should have submitted to the Muslim demands so easily and so effortlessly to partition the country! Indeed, as years roll on the grim realities and facts unfold very clearly. All the time Gandhi was right there with his toothless mouth with no words to speak after he saw his own camoflaged politics fallen in utter ruins.

Althpugh there have been many meetings between Gandhi and Muhammad Ali Jinnah on the latter's demand for a separate Muslim country, the issue was never considered seriously even till 1942, when C.Rajagopalachari openly began to urge acceptance of the demands of the Muslim League. Even this 'South Indian fox' had no courtesy to see the validity of the call for the dominion status as propagated by Mrs. Besant. All these men had craved for power by hook or by crook and at the cost of the division of the country, ~~and~~ after enjoying power and in retirement they would chew the cud and say that dominion status of Mrs. Besant's concept was better.

What sort of leadership the country had with Gandhi amusing himself with all those uncalled for movements of civil disobedience? A lot of bloodshed, confusion and partition could have been avoided if Gandhi and his cronies had ~~been~~ left the country to work out the dominion status and then allowed the next generation to get the 'full independence'. That would have been a very logical way and the entire country would have been in tact without the creation of Muslim countries on either ~~sa~~ side of India, the size of which was thus reduced and the nation humiliated.

Gandhi's general outlook and politics have yet to be studied minutely, because the more one studies Gandhi the more obstinate and assertive politician emerges out of him. He seemed to have been simply playing a game of self-gratification at the cost of the country. Sir Strafford Cripps came to India with his very reasonable plan called

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Cripps Plan to solve the Independence question. That was during the war time in 1942-43, when the issue of Pakistan was not at all considered as seriously as it was talked about later on. From all reports, it was found as a reasonable formula and even Muslim too did not object to that at that time. But Gandhi in his own self-righteous way rejected that plan as 'a post-dated cheque'. Years later, Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy of the time, said that he had predicted that Gandhi would meet his end in the way he did.

Incidentally it should also be said that none of the Viceroys beginning from Lord Chelmsford to Lord Wavell, had any good opinion on Gandhi as a politician, and even as a saint, that soldier-Viceroy Wavell give him only fifteen per cent marks and not more. By the time the last Viceroy Mountbatten came, Gandhi had lost his power with Nehru heading the Interim Government. Anyway Gandhi had no business to reject the Cripps' offer, but the old crank had always wanted his views- either rejection or acceptance of any plan or formula, should prevail!

As the war was almost ending, a Cabinet Mission from England visited India in 1945. The members of the Mission toured the country and produced an elaborate plan as a prelude to the full freedom of the country, and from then on the Indian Muslims rallied round Jinnah and clamoured for the division of the country. Gandhi called Jinnah 'a great leader' and they met many times, but nothing happened. In the meantime, for the good luck of the disgruntled politicians the Labour Party came to power in England, and they hastened the process of Indian independence. Muhammad Ali Jinnah drew record crowds in Indian cities and told the British that 'India shall be divided or they shall have India destroyed'

But that was not an empty threat. Both Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru had provoked the 'great Muslim leader' by their irresponsible utterances. Amongst them, Jawaharlal, still under the protective wings of Gandhi, was going about behaving like an upstart. That man was doubly lucky to the misfortune of the country, because his only rival Subhaschandra Bose, a more ardent patriot, disappeared from India in 1940, showed himself in Germany and later in Malaya, Burma and elsewhere with his National Army and then unfortunately rushed to his untimely death in 1946. With that Nehru was saved but India lost a symbol of democracy without an equally strong leader to trounce Nehru in order to build a sound two-party democratic system in the country.

Muhammad Ali Jinnah, once a staunch Indian nationalist, was vociferous in his claim for Pakistan and in his contempt for Gandhi and Hindus. When he was told that among Hindus there were some good and reasonable men, he said, 'there are none'. He accused them for creating communal disturbance and said that they were 'incapable of governing themselves and still less of governing others'.

Sir Winston Churchill's war-time Conservative Government seemed to have been considering the problem of Indian independence, but Sir Winston was categorical in his statement in 1941, that he 'would not preside over his Majesty's Government to liquidate the British empire. He also remarked later on as under:

"Liberty is man's birthright. However, to give the reins of government to Congress at this juncture, is to handover the destiny of hungry millions into the hands

of rascals, rogues and freebooters. Not a bottle of water or a loaf of bread shall escape taxation; only the air will be free, and the blood of these hungry millions will be on the head of Mr. Attlee. India will be lost in political squabbles--------It will take a thousand years for them to enter the periphery of philosophy or politics Today we handover the reins of Government to men of straw, of whom no trace will be found after a few years."

This was what Churchill said when the Indian Independence Bill was debated in the English parliament. That was a harsh statement but Indians ~~do~~ would do well now after thirty-five years, to ponder over the whole thing calmly and objectively instead of dismissing those words as unfriendly and arrogant. Anyway Clemant Attlee, the new Prime Minister under the Labour Party Government, decided to grant freedom to India after cutting the 'Gordian Knot', the Hindu-Muslim problem. In order to speed up the process, he decided to replace Lord Wavell by Lord Louis Mountbatten of Burma, a member of the British royal family, as Viceroy of India. Lord Mountbatten arrived in India on the 23rd March I947, and within a few hours he summoned Gandhi from Patna to Delhi. Gandhi returned by train refusing to fly in the Viceregal plane sent to him.

By this time, the Indian Muslim League had gone far ahead in their claims, and for this Gandhi's National Congress itself was responsible. After C.Rajagopalachari's open support to the Muslim demand, he envisaged another scheme in I944 and that was called 'Rajaji Formula', and this was an improvement of his earlier stand. Gandhi committed himself to this 'formula', and the Indian Muslims were quick to pick up the whole thing from that end, and after that they would never go back. In I945-46 there were several Gandhi-Jinnah meetings but all that was a waste of their time and energy

With that Gandhi's wooing of Jinnah by calling him 'a great leader', Jawaharlal Nehru's irresponsible outbursts and Vallabhai Patel's hatred for Muslims, had little effect. The Hindu leaders never at any stage tackled the Muslim problem seriously putting themselves in the position of minorities. To add to that, those leaders lacked political foresight and a sense of integrity of an united India. So much so, when the Muslim League joined the Interim Government in I946, the League members of the Cabinet saw that they break up the Hindu-Muslim collaboration in the Government and created deadlock at the Centre. In fact, the Muslim League joined the Government only to non-cooperate with the their Hindu colleagues in the Government.

Lord Mountbatten's efforts to reconiciliate too failed. Gandhi went to the extent of telling him that Jinnah be empowered to form a Government or Jinnah could be asked to be the Governor-General of India. These things seemed to have been too ~~powerful~~ personal for a proud Jinnah. He would not have anything of the sort. He stuck to his demand of Pakistan, while at the other end the man who was already the prime minister of the Interim Government, Jawaharlal Nehru opposed Gandhi's overtures, evidently ~~deeds~~ in his own interest. Gandhi seemed to have failed, and in frustration he left Delhi to places where there were communal riots, clashes and killings.

During Gandhi's absence, Lord Mountbatten convinced Nehru, Patel, and Kripalani, the then President of the Congress, on the necessity of coming to an understanding even at

at the risk of splitting the country. He told them that the British were bent upon relinquishing their hold over the country and that they had no longer wanted to maintain an empire. At the other end in the Constituent Assembly of India, the most heckled members of the Government were Nehru and Vallabhbai Patel. The Finance portfolio was in the hands of Liaquat Ali Khan of the Muslim League, and he saw that the Hindu members had no power to spend a single paisa or to appoint even a CHAPRASI without his approval. This sort of thing suffocated the otherwise arrogant Nehru and iron-fisted Sardar Patel, both of whom secretly agreed with Lord Mountbatten to accede to the demands of the Muslim League. The Congress President J.B.Kripalani too was convinced on the point. C.Rajagopalachari, who was then the governor of West Bengal must have happily chuckled that his scheme for partition had at last been achieved. At the Congress Working Committee meeting, the Congress president let the cat out of the bag stating that they had agreed between themselves to partition the country due to the circumstances that were beyond their control. Gandhi had resisted the move all along and now at the meeting he took this announcement of his lieutenants with great surprise.

The Congress leaders tried to convince Gandhi on partition. They accused Liaquat Ali Khan of introducing budget designed to harm the industrialists and businessmen, the majority of whom were Hindus. The Viceroy impressed on the Congress leaders the deadlock that necessitated partition. Soon the Hindu leaders accepted the Muslim League demand by demanding, 'Whether we like it or not, there were two nations in India. There was no alternative except to recognise the fact'.

But Gandhi wouldn't recognise the fact so easily. He said that he should have been consulted before they agreed on such an important subject. Then it was Jawaharlal Nehru who taunted that they had no time to consult. Gandhi must have then said 'ET-TU Brutus'. That was the last 'kick' that the 'Master' got from the man who was foisted by him on the country. Vallabhbai Patel thought, it seems, that like 'a true democrat' Gandhi would agree with their secret decision. But the actual fact was that they knew that the real power had passed on to their hands and Gandhi was no more in command.

Furthermore, as he had done many times before, on this historic occasion too, Gandhi compromised his principle and meekly submitted to the decision of those half-a-dozen men. Now there was no more the old Gandhi of dictatorial trends. There was only a fallen and frustrated Gandhi with all his followers enjoying top offices and ruling India whereas he was left out in the streets. This was a pitiable situation of Gandhi and which situation was created by himself by his obstinacy. Had he been reasonably accommodative to Mrs. Annie Besant's ideas and for her plan for Dominion Status, the history of India would have taken a more dignified course with an united India remaining in tact.

However, thus ended the great struggle of over sixty years within five or six days, and decided by about five or six men, excluding Gandhi. Maulana Azad, with his HUKKA, watched the entire joke silently and he as a true Muslim, did not protest at the decision of the Hindu leaders. The Pathan leader Khan Abdul Ghaffur Khan told Gandhi that he and

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his men were thrown to the wolves and they were all terribly let down. The Congress President Kripalani who had served Gandhi for over thirty years, said that Gandhi had not yet found the way to suppress violence and communal tensions in the country. Dr. R.M. Lohia was a silent witness to that sordid drama that enacted the bitterest scene of the Indian history and he charged Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhabai Patel and Kripalani as three 'guilty men' who took the decision to divide the country. Gandhi murmured that all his thirty years of labour (what labour?) had gone in vain. Evidently the old man should have known that fasting, organizing street scenes in the name of truth and non-violence, taking dictatorial decisions on national matters etc could be only cheap politics. In fact, Gandhi and his men never thought or discussed the Hindu-Muslim problem with all the seriousness and earnestness it deserved. On the other hand, both Gandhi and Nawaharlal Nehru were indulging in cheap ~~rhetorics~~ rhetorics which the Muslims resented. Some months before the actual decision for the partition of the country was taken, Gandhi announced that the creation of Pakistan could only be on his dead body, but then he saw that he was still alive and Pakistan had become an established fact.

From then on, Gandhi himself became a back number. His trying to quell the communal troubles and walking amidst the rioters had little effect. He saw his former stooges becoming more powerful as ministers. Now he took to defend the rights of Muslims who were left in India, and that was only a psychological kick that pricked his consciousness. He took to plead for the lost causes of no consequence. He even undertook ~~in~~ a fast in order to see that the Muslims who were left out in Delhi and in India are well-treated, and at the same time gave his blessings to the new Congress Government of India to send Army to Kashmir to drive out the Pakistani aggressors.

All this showed Gandhi as a spent force. With that he also showed his inconsistency which he had shown many times before. That was the time in later 1947 when his life was even threatened. But in order to play the role of a saint and martyr, Gandhi refused to have any police protection, whatsoever. He also forced the Government to pay a sum of Rs. 55 crores that was due to Pakistan, and all these things created a nation-wide bitterness against Gandhi who was, after all, not directly responsible either for the creation of Pakistan or for some of the absurd policies of the Government of his own men.

But Gandhi became a scape-goat while the real guilty men of partition of the country escaped and enjoyed power, but in all that Gandhi had his moral responsibility which he could not deny. He knew that, and all that increased his worries that made him to rush through his unpopular and unwarranted actions that he pursued during those couple of months before he was assassinated.

Although Gandhi's influence waned, he wrote to his people to disband the Congress organization and turn it as Sarvodaya Samaj but now his people had bigger things to do than such petty projects. Gandhi's efforts to stop corruption was also a failure because the top Congressmen themselves began their job by themselves becoming absolutely corrupt.

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Gandhi's leadership went wrong for another reason also. Most of his followers beginning from Motilal Nehru, Chittaranjan Das and others, and down to the last Congressman in the streets of Indian cities, were disgruntled men for various resons. Most of them were defectors from other groups. There were briefless lawyers traders, dismissed government servants and several unemployed or under-employed people. Amongst them were literally many paupers with no other occupation in those days of world-wide depression of I920s and I930s. These people were absorbed as Congressmen and Gandhi too knew there were such men, who were helpful to afford street scenes by way of violent demonstrations, riots and so on.

All the same, the British Government looked at Gandhi's Congress on the law and order level although they were keen to see Indians develop as true nationalists. The Congressmen of those days were eager to go to jails and cynics would say that they would get arrested because they would get better food in jails and much better than they would eat in their own homes. Those Congressmen should thank the British for having treated these men liberally even as prisoners with facilities to read, write and conduct commercial transactions from inside their cells. Thousands of politicians of those days had felt that going to a British jail was like going to some recreation centre, and Gandhi was the leader of these who flourished as nationalists although they didn't mean as such.

How did Gandhi fail, apart from the men who were around him? To recount some bitter facts, as a result of the India Act of I935, some provinces which had Congress majority were allowed to form Governments in I937, and that was the opportunity for the Congress to mobilise the Muslim support and cooperation and confidence. But what happened was exactly the opposite. The Gandhi-Nehru politics saw that the Muslims did not get good representation. With great disappointment and resentment, they organized themselves under Muhammad Ali Jinnah and intensified their agitation for Pakistan.

Gandhi and some senior leaders had disagreed with Nehru's socialistic views, socialist planning etc, and yet Gandhi backed Nehru, the 'show boy' of the Congress, as Jinnah called him. But Gandhi did not seem to consider those things seriously because at that time he wanted Nehru because an opponent to both of them was emerging in Subhas Chandra Bose. When the Great War was about to begin, Gandhi wrote a letter to Adolph Hitler on the 23rd July I939, perhaps, on the line of Mrs. Besant's letter to President Hoover of United States, exactly ten years before that in I929, that:

> "Friends have been urging me to write to you for the sake of humanity--------It is quite clear that you are today one person in the world who can prevent war which may reduce humanity to the savage state. Must you pay that price for an object however worthy it may appear to you to be? Will you listen to the appeal of one who has deliberately shunned the method of war not without considerable success?--------."

There was no report on Gandhi receiving any reply to this letter. In December I94I, he wrote another letter to Hitler urging him to consider the advantage of non-violence and castigating him for actions which were'monstrous and unbecoming of human dignity'. That was a long letter on the power of non-violence, and that too did not merit any reply from

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Hitler who was busy with his war against humanity. In June I940, Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy Lord Linlithgow, on the role of the British in the war:

> "This man slaughter should be stopped; you are losing; if you persist, it will result in greater bloodshed. Hitler is not a bad man. If you call it off today, he will follow suit. If you want to send me to Germany or anywhere else, I am at your disposal. You can also inform the cabinet about this."

This unasked for and irrelevant advice was not wanted by the British. Gandhi had a lurking desire to see the British lose the war after the fall of Belgium, France, Dunkirk etc. He was also expecting the British to lose the war at any time and, therefore, said, 'A defeated Raj was to rule over 350 million Indians?'. The British, however, were too clever to look at Gandhi's design and motives in true perspective. Lord Linlithgow replied, that:

> "We are engaged in a struggle. As long as we do not achieve our aim, we are not going to budge---------Everything is going to be all right."

Gandhi was all the time feeling that he was losing ground. In order to show that he was still a force, he launched his individual Satyagraha in I94I and the 'Quit India' movement in I942. This man of non-violence was whipping through such agitations a nation which was at war for no fault of theirs. The British soon found Gandhi as not reliable as a man though the latter could go on fooling the Indian masses with his well-publicised agitations which invariably ended in destruction of life and public properties. Indeed, here one should remember what those older men had already told about Gandhi's lust for destruction, as long back as I920.

All that was sheer momentary tactics of a crank. The Muslims were organising themselves. In England, Rahmat Ali was active with his Pakistani National movement, and Gandhi's call to the British to 'Quit India' was responded by the Muslims saying 'Divide and Quit' which they had to do ultimately.

Long back in I920, the Quide-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah had held firmly the idea of Hindu Muslim unity, and Mrs. Sarojini Naidu had once called him 'the ambassador of Hindu Muslim unity'. But from I933 onwards Jinnah stood head and shoulders for Pakistan and called Gandhi 'a Hindu revivalist'.

It is here one should note how Gandhi failed. Jawaharlal Nehru's influence over him as a pet of an older man, contributed to some extent to Gandhi's perverted politics. As all politicians who take to politics as a profession, Jawaharlal too had taken to that, and in Jinnah he saw a rival to him. He would taunt Muslims and prejudice Gandhi talking about Jinnah's stand in politics. Irresponsible talks of that sort had adverse effect on their politics and ultimately the country lingered on to be partitioned. It was unfortunate that Gandhi didn't live for at least a couple of years after that to realise what after all he did and where at last it led him!

The war in Kashmir had just begun, and this champion of non-violence who wrote and talked to the world all about such things, himself agreed to send Indian Army to Kashmir to fight the aggressors and, of course, he had different explanation for that.

Gandhi told the Ethiopians to die instead of killing their aggressive Italian enemies, and told the people of Europe to face Hitler's bombs and die as heroes. Later when the war knocked his own door he would want his Government to fight. Gandhi's contradictions were numerous, and at this distance of the time one could only say that he had been simply making a mess of Indian politics without actually meaning all that he said or did. As a person bundled up in frustration from his youth and then yearning to reach the uncertain heights of self-aggrandizement, Gandhi bungled from end to end, and that was his story. Now it is time to listen to his killer, Nathuram Godse, who said that:

"Born in a devotional Brahmin family, I instinctively came to revere Hindu religion, Hindu history and Hindu culture--------Since the year 1920, i.e. after the death of Lokmanya Tilak, Gandhi's influence in the Congress first increased and then became supreme. His activities for public awakening were phenomenal in their intensity and were reinforced by the slogan of truth and non-violence which he paraded ostentantiously before the country. No sensible or enlightened person could object to these slogans. In fact, there is nothing new or original in them. They are implicit in every constitutional public movement----------.

"The accumulating provocation of thirty-two years, culminating in the last pro-Muslim fast, at last goaded me to the conclusion that the existence of Gandhi should be brought to an end immediately. Gandhi had done very good work in South Africa to uphold the rights and self-respect of the Indian community there. But on coming back to India, he developed a subjective mentality under which he alone was to be the final judge of what was right or wrong. If the country wanted his leadership it had to accept his infallibility, if it did not, he would stand aloof from the Congress and carry on in his own way. Against such an attitude there can be no half-way house-----.

"He alone was the judge of everyone and everything; he was the master-brain guiding the civil disobedience movement; none other than him could know the technique of that movement. He alone knew when to begin it and when to withdraw it. The movement might succeed or fail, it might bring untold disaster and political reverses but that could make no difference to the Mahatma's infallibility. 'A Satyagrahi can never fail' was his formula for declaring his own infallibility and nobody except himself knew what a Satyagraha is!

"Thus the Mahatma became the judge and jury in his own cause. These childish insanities and obstinacies, coupled with a most severe austerity of life, and ceaseless work and lofty character made Gandhi formidable and irresistibe. Many people thought that his politics were irrational but they had either to withdraw from the Congress or place their intelligence at his feet to do with as he liked. In a position of such absolute irresponsibility, Gandhi was guilty of blunder after blunder, failure after failure, disaster after disaster--------.

"Only on the rarest occasions did the Mahatma have a dim glimpse of the error of his policy. He then admitted his Himalayan blunders, but continued in his own ways. In his prayer speech on November 5, 1947, Mahatma Gandhi said, 'I confess my own impotence in that my words lack the strength-------'. Why did this great power decline? It is common knowledge that spiritual power which can be acquired by the scientific Yogic process laid down by our great seers always declines if prostituted to worldly purposes---------."

"I assassinated Gandhi not with any earthly selfish motive but as a sacred duty dictated by the pure love of my motherland. Even when I did the act, I knew the consequences; I felt the rough hand of the hangman on my shoulder, the cold loop of his rope around my neck. But that could not swerve me from my mission nor did I want, or try, to escape the consequence. If my people can appreciate my motive, I am prepared, rather eager, to die a happy and pleasant death."

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"My respect for the Mahatma was deep and deathless. It therefore gave me no pleasure to kill him. Indeed my feelings were like those of Arjuna when he killed Dronacharya, his Guru, at whose feet he had learnt the art of war. But the Guru had taken the side of the wicked Kauravas and for that reason he felt no compunction in finishing his revered Guru. Before doing so, however, he first threw an arrow at the feet of Drona, as a mark of respect for the Guru; the second arrow he aimed at the chest of the Guru and finished him--------On the 30th January (I948), I bowed to him first, then at point blank range fired three successive shots and killed him. My provocation was his constant and consistent pandering to the Muslims. I had no private grudge, no self-interest, no sordid motive in killing him--------."

This was the statement of Nathuram Godse, that he made during his trial for killing Gandhi. These words were clearly spelt and a detailed account to substantiate all that he said could be found in many pages of this book. Very brilliant brains were involved in the conspiracy- all extremist Hindus, and they were no misguided men according to their own statements. Veer Savarkar, that old revolutionary, then 65 years old, 'looking imperious and domineering, sat alone in the back' during the Gandhi Murder trial. It was this same man who had told twenty years before that in I927 to Gandhi, that, 'You are making 'experiments' at the cost of the nation'. Among the other conspirators, Apte, Badge and Parachure were prominent.

Nathuram Godse's defense was defence; 'it was a cry of triumph wholly irrational, explicable only in terms of the ancient myths', said Robert Payne. Godse took himself the responsibility for the murder and did not implicate anyone. However, excepting Vinayak D. Savarkar, all others were sentenced by Justice Atma Charan at the trial held in the Red Fort, Delhi.

The killer of Gandhi seemed to have been an idealist. One should appreciate his frank and straight confession, and for his feelings for the country. Yet one could say from the subsequent events that happened within the country that Godse might have killed a wrong man, according to some views expressed later on. He had other ways to convince Gandhi who had lost most of his power by that time. Anyway all this has now passed into history and one could only hope that there would be no more such tragic events in future!

Here ends the story of the two contemporary stalwarts- one died a natural death in September I933, and the other was killed in ~~I9~~ January I948, fifteen years later. Suppose Annie Besant had been at least twenty years younger in I933, she would have seen that the history of the country had taken different turn. However, both she and Gandhi died as frustrated persons without their aims being fully realised and as they had desired. The free country that Gandhi saw was a tattered and mutilated one and to achieve that kind of freedom no one had dreamt. Annie Besant's biographer, Nethercot, said that: 3.

"If India had followed her advice in I929, the country would probably have obtained Dominion Status seventeen years earlier than it did; it would probably have retained Pakistan and there would have been no Kashmir problem (or Bangladesh that was created in I97I). For in I928, Muslims and Jinnah had not yet grown strong enough to demand Pakistan- or to have thought of it. The holocaust of the transition from British colony

3. Nethercot on Annie Besant, Vol. 2, Page 468-469.

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to self-governing Commonwealth, due to the Hindu-Muslim intolerance would perhaps never have happened. For these things the responsibility must be assumed by the extreme independence party (or the Congress led by Gandhi).....

"Gandhi must have been apotheosised by millions of Indians today. His very irrationality, his mystic defiance of the principles of common sense, his persistence in spite of his 'Himalayan blunders', the frequent success of his fantastic almost crack-brained schemes, endeared him to the masses--------.

"Annie Besant too was a mystic, drawing inspiration from within herself. But she had a hard bed-rock of common sense in spite of her occultism--------Her deeply ingrained loyalty to Britain controlled her long-standing sympathy with India. Compromise therefore resulted within her--------But it was a sort of hard-headed compromise that might have saved India from years of 'passive' riot, arson and bloodshed, and even from the horrors of 'communal' civil war 'tween Hindus and Muslims.

"Gandhi's patented discoveries and their application- the hunger strike, Satyagraha, etc has now taken manifold forms. Linguistic strifes, border troubles, communal violence, cow agitation, Nexalite troubles etc are all violent in nature-------."

Most of Annie Besants conclusions are appropriate even today. Her protests to Gandhian movement of civil disobedience were also quite in order. Her classic utterance, 'bullets for brickbats' too, is appropriate today and for all times, but those were the times when Indians were incapable of assessing and appreciating others' points of view, especially when those 'others' were foreigners. In 1961 Jawaharlal Nehru admitted that:

"To tell thetruth, I did not approve of fasting as a political weapon even when Gandhi practised it--------But we in India came to accept many things about Gandhi. -------I have made it clear that Government will not be influenced by hunger-strikes.

Unfortunately this man was simply bluffing. He was the first timid prime minister of India who gave a cruel twist to all such things and then knaively submitted to the force of such farce. In the 1950s, when Potti Sriramulu fasted and then died for the cause of Andhra State, this same Nehru was frightened of the consequence, and immediately formed the Andhra State and then caused the redrawal of the map of India on linguistic lines. Thus our leadership had always been weak and without any principles, whatsoever. Nehru said, when asked about Gandhi reconciling to the use of force, or for war in Kashmir, that:

"I was greatly troubled in mind and spirit because I knew that we might have to face a war so soon after achieving our independence through a philosophy of non-violence--------Yet I reacted. Gandhi said nothing to indicate his disapproval. It was a great relief, I must say--------This strengthened my belief that Gandhi could be adaptable."

Here too Nehru was not frank. Gandhi had been adaptable and inconsistent many a time. It was Nehru who knew Gandhi well and not the rest of the people. Nehru told the former prime minister of Canada, Lester Pearson, that Gandhi was a sort of humbug, and of course, Pearson was surprised to hear that. However, in this particular case concerning Kashmir war, both Gandhi and Nehru were disrespectful to the views they had held. It was Gandhi who blurted most on the evils of war, of violence and so on and yet when the war came, he forgot all that he was saying to the rest of the world.

'Annie Besant knew how to wear sandals in India and shes in the rest of the world', said Nehru as though to insinuate her but that was exactly he did all the time between

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Europe and India. In Europe he would show himself as a perfect European with well-fitted Western suits, and as soon as he landed in India he would change into shirts and pajamas, and Gandhi cap. That was the way the politicians would show themselves.

Annie Besant knew this but then kept aloof from them during the last four years of her life. She did not express her indignation. She would not reveal her mind even to her trusted friends like Ramaswami Iyer because she must have known that these Indians would easily and efforlessly let down the other. 'Annie Besant', wrote Bail P.Howell in his review, 'was a warrior statesman or woman whose integrity and compassionate service still shines in one form or the other in the countries where she worked.' Writing about her, G. Bernard Shaw said that long back in I877, she edited a magazine called OUR CORNER, and was 'an incorrigible benefactress'. He also said, that: 4.

> "In I885, at the Fabian Society, Graham Wallas, myself and Mrs. Besant were the only representative open-air speakers. Mrs. Besant was the greatest orator in England, perhaps, the greatest in Europe. Certainly, the combination of Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant was one so extraordinary that its dissolution was felt as a calamity, as if someone had blown up Niagara or earthquake that swallowed a cathedral--------The secret of her collaboration with Bradlaugh had been that she too was as essentially heroic in her methods as in her power, courage and oratorical genius."

Proceeding Bernard Shaw wrote in his autobiography, that:

> "I was utterly confounded (when I saw her book- 'How I Became a Theosophist). I rushed to the Secular Society's shop in Fleet Street, and finding her there in an exasperatingly happy mood, asked her whether she was mad, and whether she knew that Mme. Blavatsky's shrine at Adyar (Madras) had just been convincingly shown up as a fraud by an Indian--------.It was no use. I played all tricks by which I could puzzle her--------But this time I met my match. She listened to me with complete kindness and genuine amusement, and then she said she had become a vegetarian---------She was no longer in the grip of her pride; she had after many explorations have found her path and come to see the Universe and herself in their real perspective.
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> "That was the end of our collaboration---------though my high regard for her never changed--------Like all great public speakers, she, an atheist-Bible smasher, a Darwinian Secularist, a Fabian socialist, a strike leader and finally a Theosophist------ She saw herself as a priestess above all. That was how Theosophy held her to the end.'

Of course, Bernard Shaw also stated facts concerning all her personal worries and disappointments in her early days. The public work and activities provided new outlet for her restlessness. Jinarajadasa, a former President of the International Theosophical Society, aptly wrote, that: 5.

> "Who remembers now how she championed the cause of Afghanistan and India in I879, of Transval in I88I, of Ireland in I882, and afterwards of Egypt in I882 and of the Sudan in I885? For, all her life she has been a champion of the oppressed and the downtrodden, untiring in her fight for justice against injustice- on behalf of voteless women, on behalf of defenceless animals."

Gandhi too had similar spirit to fight for human rights and dignities. To begin with, he too had to suffer from worries and frustrations in his youth, and like Annie Besant, he

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4. Nethercot- on Annie, Vol. 2, Pages 468,469 etc,
5. The Theosophist- Special Issue- October I933.

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too had to undergo a lot of trials, tribulations and humiliations at the hands of his own people as well as authorities. But the basic difference between the two was that Mrs. Annie Besant was realistic as a fighter whereas Gandhi was fantastic. Mrs. Besant always knew what she was doing whereas Gandhi was not. Mrs. Besant had no selfishness in her motives to serve except an urge to serve humanity, and service was her motto like Florence Nightingale and Mother Teressa, whereas Gandhi seemed to have been a professional politician without being clear of what he was doing with all his so called Satya, Satyagraha, Ahimsa etc ~~in~~ which, as his assassin had lucidly said, he was either uncertain or he didn't know. Mrs. Besant had always a clear vision in her politics and a definite goal to take India to her ancient glory whereas Gandhi, with his loin cloth and saintly garb, played politics to rouse the mob frenzy by his agitating, fasting, law-breaking demonstrations and coercive methods, ~~but~~ and to take the country to nowhere.

Some of these basic differences are yet to be studied closely and objectively. There is yet another important point to ponder. In respect of Mrs. Besant and her colleagues in politics in the England of the late I9th century, the British liberalism and the winds os socialism were blowing all over Europe, and that benefitted them to carry on their agitations for human rights. That same trend they found in the British colonies, too. In India, Octavian Hume, W.Wedderburn, Samuel Smith and others inspired Indians to act in the end of the last century.

Therefore, like the industrial renaissance of Europe, the renaissance of nationalism too was imported to India by the Europeans, and there is no need to ignore this basic concept of Indian nationalism which was not there, and which was unheard of at any time in the pre-Nineteenth century India.

India might have had hoards of religious men, saints and professional philosophers in the past, whose real facts of life are shrouded in myths, anecdotes and fairy-tales. Hardly do we get the true account of their career except, as their writings reveal, that they were intellectual giants of their time. But in the last century if the British had not been there in India, the country would not have got such gallant idealists and nationalists like Raja Rammohan Roy, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Sir Syed Ahmad, Dadabhai Naoroji and Swami Vivekananda. Mohandas Gandhi was a late-commer in that tradition.

Even there Gandhi differed from those men. All those who were brought up in the British environment and enlightenment in the last century, were grateful to the British for introducing modernization into the country with their system of education, administration and technology, and in that Gandhi somehow appeared to have been both a cynic and an upstart. He found nothing good in them, nor would he accept and acknowledge the benefits he personally had, apart from all that the country had, out of the British system although he would at times mutter that if the British were not there in those days the situation would have been very bad for the people to exist as a nation.

But Gandhi would often indulge in idle metaphors in order to remind others that he was also a saint. He would tell the Viceroy and Governors to live in simple bungalows although his own patrons like Birla, and his followers were rich enough than those Viceroys or

Governors. He would denounce the machine age and yet travelled in motor cars, railway trains and talked through microphones. He would want to close down the textile mills and ask people to use home-spun cloth and thus help to develop the cottage industry. The Western civilization and technology were all 'an anathema' to Gandhi, and he fed people as his followers who would only do exactly ~~opposite~~ the opposite of what he said or wished. Jawaharlal and all reasonable and sane people found that: 6.

> "To follow Gandhi's ideas was to step backward into the past, to submit India to the most confining autarchy imaginable, that of its villages. To their chagrin, the Mahatma insisted on proclaiming publicly the canons by which he hoped they and the other leaders of the new India would live."

From all accounts it could be safely concluded that Gandhi was a failure as a social reformer, a politician and also as a saint. There were only anamolies and ambiguities in his ways and actions. He would speak as a visionary and not as a realist. His theories would always have 'a number of piquant contradictions'. His trying to be a perfectionist was all right for him personally but when he hoped that the entire 500 millions would follow him he was overplaying his game. That was how he failed as a leader, and to the country he left only a lot of his controversial writings and his name, and nothing else. The country's political history would have had a better turn if there had been no Gandhi who had been simply bungling, partly as a saint and partly as a social reformer, although he was only a full-time politician. Many years later, an objective thinker would conclude that Gandhi substantially contributed by his indiscreet politics to the division of the old United India of the British times and then invited death by his obstinacy and ineffective way of handling things and tackling problems.

> "Every minister, he said, should wear Khadi exclusively, live in a simple bungalow with no servants. He should not own a car. He should be free of the taint of caste, spend at least one hour a day in physical work, spinning, or growing food and vegetables to ease the food shortage. He would avoid 'foreign furniture, sofas, tables and chairs' and go around without bodyguards. Above all, Gandhi was sure 'no leader of an independent India will hesitate to give an example by cleaning out his own toilet box'.

> "Naive yet unassailably wise, his words were poignantly revealing of the dilemma inherent in all of Gandhi's ideals. They were a perfect schema cast for imperfect actors. A quarter of a century after his death, India's gravest political ill would be the corruption and venality of the very Congress ministers who Gandhi had hoped would follow in his footsteps."

But did the Congress ministers follow in Gandhi's footsteps? If they had followed him just in loin cloth and bare chest, certainly they wouldn't have been there ministers and legislators, and the old crank ought to have had known that also! Or, did Gandhi just pretend talking about all these superficial or superfluous things? Well, the old man didn't say what exactly he had meant by all that and to whom he was saying most of those improbably and impossible things!

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6. Collins & Lapierre- Freedom at Midnight- Pages 202 to 206.

CHAPTER XVIII

MRS. BESANT 'AWAKENED A SLUMBERING NATION'.

Furthermore, Gandhi has left a biggest question for the posterity to answer. The Gandhian politicians wouldn't answer that as most of them evaporated into the dust and din of power politics since 1947. The question was that if Gandhi was a man of principle, which he must have been, if he was a saint and that he would not sacrifice his principles for cheap politics, if he had stuck on to his ill-defined and unwarranted tactics and technics of SATYAGRAHA, and if he had strenously pleaded, which he did, with Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the Viceroys General Wavell and Admiral Mountbatten, to prevent the partition of India, the question still remained as to how and who agreed to divide India, where was he at that time and where was his principle of not surrendering or compromising that to mere political exigencies?

This long question does not end there. Much has been said about the 'guilty men of the partition of India', and there too one could see a leader, and that man was none other than Gandhi's pet, his protege, who later on got bloated and ballooned to the Indian skies by the Indian mobs and through sheer'mobocracy'. And that pet of Gandhi was Jawaharlal Nehru who took a few of his men behind the back of his 'master' and talked them into the partition of India.

But then there is still a good deal to be probed into this issue. Lord Mountbatten was sent from England by the newly elected Labour Government, headed by one 'Mahatma' Clemant Attlee, and it was he who sent 'Pandit' Mountbatten to India, who in turn befriended Jawaharlal Nehru. They, of course, talked over the matter and then secretly came to the decision of vivisecting India in response to Mountbatten's plea that Muslims were adament, and that the British were anxious to relinquish power, and that they were no longer interested to stay on.

Well, that was all right! What else did 'Pandit' Mountbatten and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru talk among themselves, was not clear, but it is THAT delicate aspect of their talk that still remains a mystery. Jawaharlal departed long back, or if he had been living now, no one would expect any truth to come out of him, but that sailor-statesman Mountbatten is still there, and he has talked a lot on his role in the whole negotiation concerning the partition. He should say what went on secretly between him and Pandit Nehru so that they could arbitrarily decide on their own to divide the country just like that, and as dramatically as that.

Of course, people of India knew that those Nehrus have been behaving since the 1920s as though India was their ZAMIN. That egomaniac dynasty was first brought to limelight by Mrs. Annie Besant, and later Gandhi gave them undue importance, and that 'curse' had affected the country right from 1917 to 1977, a full sixty-year and not less uneventful period in the country's history.

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"We are getting old; we can no longer go and sit in gaols; we have to decide this issue one way or the other"! This was the trend of Nehru's thought as expressed by him as a reason for his decision to yield to the Muslim demand for Pakistan. But this reason was purely selfish, egoistic as well as treacherous, to say the least. When such an idea was dinned into the ears of the much older people than him, like Vallabhbai Patel, C. Rajagopalachari and Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, no wonder, they agreed because in a few years that were left to them, they thought, it was nice they slice the country, keep the disturbing Muslims away by giving them what they want, and then enjoy the remaining days quietly.

That was the trend of the thought of those old fogies of the day, and they did it! They decided on it and then informed the Viceroy about that, and things were secretly arranged. But then there was to be a mock-session of the Congress Working Committee where this idea of the partition of the country had to be formally discussed although all the members of the Committee were secretly told beforehand that they had agreed to the creation of Pakistan.

Those members, all Nehru's henchmen, who were waiting for lucrative jobs in the new set up, quietly agreed, and they didn't care a hoot to whatever happened to the country. Anyway the secret deal that they had made with the Viceroy of India, had yet to be informed to one and the only man, and that man was Gandhi.

Where was Gandhi then? With the loss of influence and power of conviction, and with no hold over his former lieutenants who had all become ministers or governors, Gandhi had become a bitterly frustrated individual. Anyway the Congress Working Committee invited him for the special meeting where the President J.B.Kripalani, talked about their decision to aceede to the demand for the creation of Pakistan, and thus let the cat out of the bag for Gandhi to pick up.

But Gandhi was shocked, puzzled and looked sad thinking that all his 'thirty years of work' was wasted. 'Is it already decided'?, he asked. 'Yes, decided', he was told. 'I should have been informed about that before', Gandhi put in. We had no time to do so', Nehru countered.

Well, that was enough for Gandhi who now became a scapegoat on account of his own Satyagraha stunts in which law-breaking exercise he spent many years enjoying himself and none else. After all, for actions there would always be reactions.

The real 'guilty men' now escaped, and later showed themselves, rather shamelessly, as gallant men, and they were the 'paper tigers' of the time. They had no regrets, no remorse, nothing, for their treacherous actions.

But then Gandhi too was not free from blame. He behaved very meekly on that occasion, and like a lamb quietly submitted himself. Some people later said that 'like a democrat' he yielded to the majority opinion. That was nonsense in this context, because for over thirty years Gandhi was almost a 'dictator', but now he was meek and he was put down by his own actions. Gandhi was told that he had not yet found a way to

break the impasse or to control the Hindu-Muslim violence and the mob fury taking place outside in the streets, and for which street scenes, he and his much-boosted SATYAGRAHA stunts were itself responsible.

Was that all the country that boasted about a Gandhi and a thousand other gods could expect? From what was said about Gandhi thus far, it was clear that his politics was sheer personal and not at all national in content, right from 1915. He wanted to be in the forefront doing something, and he knew that in a cosy atmosphere of British liberalism and the British-inspired nationalism, he could go on politicking in the way he did. He stuck to his loincloth as though to hoodwink those impoverished, superstitious and illiterate millions. That seemed to have been his idea when he suddenly showed himself like that contrary to the advice of his friend in 1923, in a far away town of the old Madras State, where he got better reception than elsewhere from those sly Brahmin politicians who were lying low and munching their jealousy against Annie Besant because of the storm she created in India by her Home Rule Movement which eventually brought the Montague-Chemsford Reforms in 1919.

Anyway now after 28 years, Gandhi let the old United India down. He could have saved his prestige, his ego and even his own life, if he had strongly protested at the decision arbitrarily taken by a couple of his erstwhile followers who decided, behind his back, on the vital issue like the partition of the country. That mock scene of the Congress Working Committee meeting, seemed to have been to humiliate the old warrior, Gandhi, who could have clearly voiced his protest and walked out of that meeting, and straight gone to the Viceroy and told him to stay on and to take a second look at the whole problem.

That was the time for Gandhi to show his sincerity to the country, but he failed. He fell into the trap of those selfish politicians who could have shelved the whole thing till at least both Gandhi and Jinnah, the arch-rivals, departed from the scene. Both of them, in fact, passed away within a year of the creation of Pakistan after contributing for the entire holocaust, communal war, civil war and eventually to Kashmir war.

Poor Gandhi! He was simply passive at the last Congress Working Committee meeting that he had attended. He had nothing to say to those betrayers and renegades who were all clamouring for high offices of power and position. Gandhi who had master-minded his own brand of hide-and-seek Satyagraha movements and controlled his men, had now lost control of everything. That was, of course, his own making, and his erstwhile stooges had known it. Otherwise they dare not hatch a plot of that magnitude concerning the future of the sub-continent. Yes, all that was the result of Gandhi's own making!

Had he walked out in protest and told the world what exactly had been done in his absensce, and what really was his goal (which, it's presumed, he didn't have any), to build a strong united India, Vinayak Savarkar and Nathuram Godse would have hailed him as a real patriot, and Jinnah too would have respected him. But Gandhi lost all their confidence, and so also of the country. If he had asserted his long held view for the undivided India the entire country and the whole world would have stood behind him. But Gandhi missed

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the opportunity. He had built up his image by playing reactionary politics against those senior leaders like Gokhale, Tilak, Sastri and Mrs. Besant from 1915 to 1922; he split the old Congress of forty years' history and formed his own group of fresh recruits and defectors and thus started to 'experiment' his self-proclaimed virtues at the cost of the country.

But the world is yet to know that Gandhi had failed as a politician. From what was said about him thus far, it is evident that he failed substantially in spite of books about him in a hundred volumes. Voluminous books, strong words, platitudes and noisy sermons wouldn't help to tell the yet untold stories of our people of the bygone days.

Could a Gandhi have flourished in any other country than the British ruled South Africa and India? Could he have been in the Czarist Russia, the Maoist China or at any of the Caliphates or Sultanates to whom he fought like a crank? Both Mussolini and Hitler didn't care for Gandhi's overtures or gestures, and why should they? Gandhi philosophised his truth and non-violence, but no one understood him. He would say that:

> "My mission is to teach by example and precept under severe restraint the use of matchless weapon of Satyagraha which's a direct corollary of truth and non-violence."

There was no dearth for strong stimulating words. He would say, that:

> "Between violence and cowardly fight, I can only prefer violence-------Non-violence is the summit of bravery."

That was well said. On the world Government, Gandhi said, that:

> "Nationalism is not the highest concept. The highest concept is the world community. Our objective is one world; we have to work for it and for the brotherhood of all humanity."

Gandhi rightly said that he was a man of religion in the guise of a politician. He held that while struggling for the freedom of his country, his goal was "friendship with the world and I can combine the greatest love with the greatest opposition to wrong."

Gandhi's nationalism like that of Annie Besant, was not confined to Indian subcontinent. He had realised that he could not serve the world unless he took the whole of India with him, and, therefore said that:

> "A country has to be free in order that it may die, if necessary, for the benefit of the world."

This poetic or metaphoric statesment is, however, not clear. He also said, that:

> "It is impossible for me to be an internationalist without being a nationalist. Internationalism is possible only when nationalism becomes a fact-------We want freedom for our country but not at the expense or exploitation of others------- I do not want freedom of India if it means the extinction of England."

This is an ideal which is genuinely Gandhian in spirit and content although to match the words with the action is difficult even to Gandhi, who would stress that:

> "The structure of the world federation can be raised only on a foundation of non-violence--------For me patriotism is the same as humanity. I am patriotic because I am human and humane."

These high-sounding words and sentiments always sound impressive, but people who sermonise would know that saying is not believing, but the things said when put into action could then be seen and then it could be said that 'seeing is believing'. Anyway it is nice to hear what others say, and Gandhi also said that:

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"Isolated independence is not the goal of the world states. It is voluntary interdependenae------There is no limit to extending our services to our neighbours across the state-made frontiers. God never made frontiers."

All these are truly Gandhian concepts, but with so many 'paradoxes and inconsistencies', said John Gunther, that:

"Nevertheless, Gandhi adds up to a great deal. The record of his life is heroic in the best sense of the word; he was a man who fought- and almost won- an elemental struggle against the nature of his environment. This tough and rubbery little man, dressed in a loin cloth and sitting by his spinning wheel, who weighs II2 pounds, took up the grotesque empire the world has ever known-------."

This was written in the I930s, when Gandhi had not yet reached the final phase of his activities, but the American writers had a way to write, and they had a motive too, in the world which was fast becoming anti-British and anti-empirical in outlook. Therefore they had to praise and boost all anti-imperial, anto-fascist and anti-Communist elements. When they did so their language and their description of men would turn out in the way they described Gandhi as above.

Now it is time to turn to Mrs. Annie Besant and see her 'all-comprehensive spiritual outlook'. She was a mixture of both the West and the East, an expert in Europe's evolutionary history and also in Indian philosophy. She, along with Charles Bradlaugh, laid the foundation of Indian nationalism even before the Indian National Congress was born in India. Annie Besant, be it known, was the star spectacle and the greatest orator at the world Congress of Religions held in Chicago, to which Swami Vivekananda too had attended. She, through her Theosophy, was the founder of the National Education movement in India. She was a writer of numerous books on religion, philosophy, and politics. It was her dynamism that inspired Gandhi to the task that he undertook and about which he had acknowledged. Annie Besant's concept of Universalism was as vast as the Universe. She wrote, that:

"I believe in an inner Government of our own world, the Occult heirarchy, composed of the Company of Just Men made perfect, the RISHIs of the Hindus and Buddhists, the Christian saints and the great prophets of the Hebrews and Muslims, who are within the reach of men, who, assisted by a great host of DEVAs, Angels and Archangels and Nature spirits guide and help upward sub-human and human evolution from the simple to the complex, from nescience to knowledge, from imperfection to relative perfection, within the inviolable laws of Nature, which express the conditions of the manifestation of the Universal life through the great Architect of our Universe'.

Writing on 'Our Mother-President' of the International Theosophical Society, from I907 to I933, for well over 25 years, Anna Kemensky said that:

"Annie Besant- in its transcription into Sanskrit, the name Besant is 'Vasanta'-------She spoke of the synthesis of religion and science, philosophy and ethics, education and art. Her dream was 'Universal religion, World University, and Universal Parliament. She saw in her heavens the fiery signs of the future civilization and spoke of the mighty effort of the vanguard---------.

"In truth, Annie Besant, or ANNA VASANTA or 'Rice Spring', looked on us as children. We used to call her in Adyar (Madras), 'Mother-President'. She used to say that we were one big family, and we felt the link. In India every Hindu called her'Mother.'

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'Mother'.....I know that she often helped those who were hostile to her. She would say, 'What could it serve me to be a mother, if I sometimes did not help my children'. She was Mother to all".

In that way Gandhi was a bit different. With his saint-like ~~pstuxx~~ posture, he would take delight in stirring up political forces which he could never control. Then in a mood of penitence, he would call off the movement, confess his mistakes and so on. Even then Gandhi was right when he said that:

"Most religious men I have met are politicians in disguise. I, however, who wear the guise of a politician, am at heart a religious man--------My religion has no geographical frontiers."

That was indeed the conception of Universal religion of Mrs. Annie Besant. But Gandhi gives his own twist for the God that's everywhere. He said:

"My God is myriad-formed, and while I sometimes I see Him in the spinning wheel, at other times I seen Him in communal unity, then again in the removal of untouchability, and that's how I establish communion with Him, according that Spirit that moves me--------."

Many Westerners found Gandhi in different ways, and he showed himself as such. Earl Clemant Attlee remarked that Gandhi 'seemed to belong to a different period of history'. When Gandhi was assassinated, Bernard Shaw exclaimed that it was ~~itxx~~'dangerous to be too good'. Gandhi's opponent in South Africa said that he was 'a prince among men' and President Truman of United States called him 'a giant among men'. Thus Gandhi, despite his eccentricities, paradoxes, inconsistencies and failures, was like 'a lonely symbol of the vanishing past' and with the departure of such a 'symbol', the people moaned saying that 'the light has gone out'.

Apart from Mrs. Besant, a Hindu, but a Westerner in every sense of the term, Gandhi stood head and shoulders above those thousands of priests, monks and scholarly ACHARYAs all over, as a man of action. Basically religious, ~~in~~ Gandhi dabbled in politics taking full advantage of the British liberalism, and to his luck he was blessed with better publicity media of his time which Annie Besant and earlier people had lacked. That was how Gandhi could get such admirers like Romain Rolland and Albert Einstein who blurted out that 'Generations to come one may scarce believe that such a man as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth'.

Yes, Gandhi walked, and his body, said Nehru, 'became a fitting vehicle for the mighty spirit within him', and so, the place 'where he sat became a temple and where he trod was a hallowed ground'. Incidentally, it may be said that Gandhi became a martyr on a Friday, the day Jesus, Socrates, Lincoln and Kennedy too became martyrs.

With all this, the intriguing fact of the peculiar and unorthodox manner in which Gandhi functioned on the political scene, remained. Most of his methods and strategies had staggered the public, and he would 'brook no opposition'. Muhammad Ali Jinnah who had once a close colloborator of Gandhi, charged him that his 'pseudo-religious movement would likely to lead a reactionary revivalism'. Indeed, Jinnah was right, but Gandhi depended, as already said, on the masses who responded to his call, but in the end he found that it was intellectuals who decided things and not the illiterate masses. He

also found that most of his associates were there as sheer opportunists. What Jawaharlal Nehru actually said about his decision to agree to partition of the country, was that:

"The truth is ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ that we were tired men, and we are getting on in years, too".

The shallow outlook of those 'show boys' in the Indian National Congress, who were there all their life, making their existence in that Organization only to survive and be called as nationalists by the dumb masses, was simply revealing. C. Rajagopalachari, supposed to have been shrewd and intelligent, said that he didn't expect that Jinnah would agree to the creation of Pakistan, and it was this man who desperately supported Muslims from I941 to I945 with his so called 'formulas'. Jawaharlal Nehru too admitted his misjudgment of Jinnah and the determination of the Muslims. 1.

All this looked knave in comparison to the robust common sense and mature political judgment of Mrs. Besant. She was the person who was much feared in her days even by men like Tilak, Malaviya and other Hindu extremists, who once told their colleagues, that: 'It would not do ~~xxxx~~ to alienate Mrs, Besant--------that wouldn't be advisable'. Tilak persuaded her to join the Congress deputation to England in I9I9 but she ~~xxxxxx~~ led her own Home Rule League, and did very effective work there. In that way the 'Besant Spirit' was completely different from the Indian 'Spirit'.

Rt. hon'ble Srinivasa Sastri spoke on the anniversary of Mrs. Besant's birth on the Ist October I943, at the Gokhale Hall, Madras, which she had built. In his high tribute to her, Sastri referred to her tremendous energy and output of work of high quality and in diverse fields. He was present, he said, at the Queens' Hall meeting in London, to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of her public work, when scores of people spoke about her matchless services. Sastri recalled seeing her marvellous energy and unsurpassed devotion to work and duty and her matchless oratory. He also spoke about her dynamism and said that her foreign birth was too much for the veteran Congress leaders of the day. When she started the Home Rule League, Sastri revealed, those Indians put a spoke in her wheel, and with all that, she had admitted, said Sastri, her greatest ambition was to be known as an Indian and live to see India free and be reborn in India. 2.

L.W.Rogers said that two of her characteristics which impressed him were her patience and the absence of all criticism. Her greatness was most pronounced, he said, in respect of her being a pioneer. "I cannot think of any statesman who saw definitely farther into the future, or more clearly, than she did", he added.

"Mrs. Besant's interest up to I898 was primarily religious; till I903 she took to social reform, and it was not until I9I3 that at last she definitely returned to politics." 3.

But then she continued her social as well as educational programmes also along with her political crusades for Home Rule, Dominion Status, etc. Lokmanya Tilak had once told her that: "If India is nearer the goal (of attaining independence) it is due to your

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1. Arthur Swinson- 'Six Minutes to Sunset'- Page I83,
2. Geoffry West- The Life of Annie Besant-.
3. " " " " "

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strenous efforts". Her idea has been a World Federation, or 'a Commonwealth of Free Nations in which India plays her equal part'. Indeed, when the Commonwealth of free nations of the former British colonies came into existence in 1947-48, the Indians sponsors of the system literally followed Annie Besant's advice given to them twenty years prior to that. Before her, political farsightedness, Gandhi and the rest of the Indians were nowhere and that must have been the reason for their being supposely jealous to her, and her views and policies. Bepin Chandra Pal had criticised her for supporting Bengal partition, but he later admitted that: 4.

> "We did not think calmly over the real psychology of Mrs. Besant's policy. We did not even impartially examine the facts of the case. Looking back upon all that, when the old controversies have died away and the old excitement has given place to a newer and larger enthusiasm for the nationalist cause in which Mrs. Besant stands completely united and ~~and~~ identified with the Nationalist party in India, we are forced to recognise the very wide difference between the Government and Mrs. Besant-------Her attitude and action in this matter was strictly correct and constitutional."

Annie Besant was 'a passionate pilgrim'. As Gandhi said, she made Home Rule a MANTRA in every village of India. Sri Ram, later the President of the Theosophical Society, wrote that: 'Our country as a free nation got into the circle of nations and that's culmination of Dr. Annie Besant's work for India in the political field'. If that was the success of her politics, one of her close associates wrote that:

> "Many volumes will be required to narrate the story of all that Dr. Besant has done for Hinduism and for all that is highest in Hindu civilization. She brought out many books and pamphlets on the SANATANA DHARMA, apart from her widely sold translation of the Bhagavad Gita."

Strangely enough Annie Besant had an intense dedication to India as her true home even before she came to India. A year before she landed in India, she sent a message from London on the 21st October 1892, when she said that:

> "India's salvation depends on herself--------and you, my brothers, are responsible for your own land. Ere long I hope to stand face to face with you, I to whom India and the Indian peoples seem nearer than the nation to which by birth I belong. In heart, I am one with you, and to you by my past I belong. Born last time under Western skies for work that needs to be done, I do not forget my true motherland, and my inner nature turns eastward ever with filial longing. When KARMA opens the door, I will walk through it, and we will meet in the body as we can already meet in mind. Sd.) Annie Besant."

What an endearing and heartening dream of a great realist who had realised most of what she had dreamt by becoming a dynamic personality of the last generation, an only woman of that magnificent dreams and achievements. Her affectionate letter to her Motherland, India, addressing the people 'My brothers', as early as 1892, a year before Swami Vivekananda addressed his American audience that way, showed that Annie was a true pioneer in every sense of the term and in every aspect of her multifarious activities. In her previous ~~birthcare previous~~ life, she was Annie Wood, and then continued to state her story bordered on her occultist influences, that: 5.

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4. 'The Theosophist'- the Special Issue, Oct. 1947,
5. " " October 1946, C.Jinarajadasa.

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"It was in India her earlier life ended as an old woman, some three years before her birth in London in 1847. During the last years of that Indian life she was blind. That life in North India, she said, was spent as a neice of the Guru of Mme. H. P. Blavatsky, and Annie remembered how as a little girl she used to play at his knee."

There is every possibility and probability that cynics dismissing such things as frivolous. The more they think that way the more intense would become the mystery of this Anglo-Irish woman's birth and activities, her devotion and her love to India and her activities all over. Her life reveals a good deal of inner secrets of her births and rebirths despite some people trying to ridicule her faith in occultism. Compared to her remarkable life, Gandhi's had been too much worldly. Mrs. Besant never claimed herself as a politician doing things as prompted by her inner voice whereas she found Gandhi going off the track in order to assert himself, either right or wrong. Like Jinnah, she too openly attacked his much publicised pseudo- religious ways in politics. His stirring up of masses by his coercive Hartals, fasts, etc were bitterly criticised by her, and in that she was thinking aloud while the rest of the people of the country simply slept even without thinking what after all Gandhi was doing.

But the starving millions of the country wanted one like Gandhi and not those well-dressed nationalists, and it was there Gandhi scored high. In addition to that, Gandhi got a better press in the 1930s while Mrs. Besant was no more by that time. Some foreign writers like Miss Catherine Mayo, John Gunther, Louis Fisher and others carried colourful reports about Gandhi and that was how Romain Rolland and Albert Einstein could form such an exaggerated opinion of Gandhi even though they hadn't seen him in those days. It makes very difficult to digest, if a man like John Gunther said in exaggerated terms about Gandhi that: "What a dazzling career--------he gave the Indian people new spirit, new unity".

This 'Inside man', the writer of current history of the countries he had visited, was admiring Gandhi from the wrong end. He should know that Gandhi and all other nationalists derived their so called spirit from the British system and liberalism, and as to the unity in the country, there was no unity at all. Gandhi could not achieve even the Hindu-Muslim unity about which he talked and people shouted hoarce for decades, Thus situation in India was deplorable with Gandhi or without Gandhi, with Annie Besant or without Annie Besant. A true unity amongst the peoples of various ethnic groups of India, and peace and tranquillity in the political sense, existed in India betweeh the years of 1860 to 1940, and that was the time when the United India developed in education, administration, industry, civil service, law and order, and so on.

After the freedom of India, Government of India spent some crores of rupees to perpetuate Gandhi's memory and published Gandhi's biography in a hundred or more volumes. Many ardent Gandhians like Tendelkar, Pyrelal, Kalelkar and others wrote voluminous works on Gandhi apart from the official history of Congress which was mostly the narrative concerning Gandhi's role in Indian politics. Many foreigners like Jeoffry Ashe, Robert Payne, Erik H. Erikson and others too brought out Gandhi's biography. Gandhi

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is also remembered in thousands of memorial plaques, statues, busts etc, and that is a tribute to common people of India who had held him in high esteem. Although Gandhi had bungled in a good many basic programmes, the summary of his active life was stimulating enough to inspire common people who had their representative in him. Sensing that outlook, that politician and the erstwhile follower, Jawaharlal, called Gandhi, 'the Father of the Nation.'

With all that the people of India are forgetful of that 'illustrious' and 'magnificent' lady whom the all India had once called Mother Besant with profound admiration and affection. Excepting a memorial stamp in her honour and some small publications about her written by her admirers of the International Theosophical Society, the Government of India of Gandhian tradition of being ungrateful to others, on the whole, did not do anything to honour her. Their sense of vision is awfully blurred that they could only blow their own trumpets and worship their own gods and live in their own narrow sphere of action. Politicians of India could hardly be expected to do anything in this direction because most of them still betray their prejudice for everything foreign although they cannot do anything but use only imported foreign things, especially in the fields of system of democracy, education, industry, science and technology.

However, there is no reason why the Government of India, like some of the backward countries of medieval times should forget some of the pre-Gandhian stalwarts like Sir Octavian Hume and Dr. Annie Besant, but for whom there would have been no freedom movement in the country and there would never have been such constitutional developments in those days right from the year 1909 to 1935 and even thereafter!

Annie Besant was 'the darling' of millions of her time, not only of India but of many parts of the world. She was the first, or one of the first, to take the message of Hindu philosophy to those distant lands of Europe, North America and Australia. She was no doubt one of the first to give a very lucid account of the ancient Hindu religion along with her Theosophical doctrines at the World Parliament of Regions at Chicago in 1893, and her speech was applauded by the thousands in the audience. Swami Vivekananda, who spoke just for three minutes, was also applauded, and some cynics said that it must have been for his yellow garments and long flowing dress, turban, etc than for anything else.

Annie Besant was the only powerful binding force in the Indian politics who brought the contending parties together many a time. In 1914 she brought Gokhale and Tilak together, in 1916 she caused the famous Lucknow Pact which brought the Hindu and Muslim leaders together, and in 1919 she tried to bring the Home Rule League and the Congress together while in London.

Annie Besant was the first Indian leader to draw around her many thousands of admirers wherever she went. She was the first who brought the women of India from out of their homes and isolation to the open and encouraged them to shout and fight for their rights and for their country. She was the first national figure to get arrested on a

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wider and far-reaching issue of freedom of India while a couple of those who got arrested before her, had only fought on grounds of Hindu-Muslim clashes or on agitation for the protection of cows and so on.

Annie Besant was the first lady to preside over the Indian National Congress in 1917 when her Home Rule League movement influenced the British Government to introduce the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms in 1919. She was the first to disagree with Gandhi's methods and policies since 1915, and later she openly criticised him for his unconstitutional civil disobedience movements. Annie Besant was the first to plead for the Dominion Status, and then take her own Commonwealth of India Bill, even up to the House of Commons in London.

Any Government or Organization venturing to bring out Dr. Annie Besant's writings and other materials in some volumes should think one-hundred times because it would not be a joke after all. This wonderful lady has been an author of over 300 books and booklets, and has been a prolific writer of numerous articles in scores of magazines and newspapers which she herself edited and published at different stages of her turbulent career. Hers was, perhaps, one of the longest periods of greatest literary output, right from 1870 to 1930, a long period of sixty years.

The International Theosophical Society could take up this work in a spirit of goodwill and bring out all her scattered works in about one-hundred volumes. That, of course, would be a gigantic task, and the countries of North America, Australia, Europe and India together could undertake this voluminous task as a joint project. Annie Besant has written on politics, religion, education, economics, science, atheism, occultism, socialism etc etc. Her recorded speeches alone might go to some thousands of pages. In real life she was a reformer, preacher, agitator, writer, lawyer, orator and so on.

The long list of travels that Mrs. Besant undertook during those sixty-five years of her active life, must be said as a world record ever. This gallant woman travelled across the world many times in those days when facilities for travelling were almost nil. She was 'bird' hopping from continent to continent sailing over the high seas unmindful of the time taken, inconvenience experienced and risks involved. She had so much energy to go through the minute details as the President of the International Theosophical Society which had open 60 'Lodges' in important cities all over, and delivered several scholarly speeches at all the places she visited. As a student of Hindu philosophy, she knew about Hindu religion than any profound Hindu scholars of the time. All this sounds like a fairy tale today because of the modern changes during the past fifty years, and yet what was said about Annie Besant is true to every word.

One should yet see this outstanding saintess and a woman leader of the millions, the like of whom had never been born before, and who enacted many roles in one and only one life of busy 86 years. From an ordinary country girl of the London suburbs, Annie grew up to enchant the humanity by her melodious and yet powerful and ringing voice and stirring oratory. In the decisive role of a political, educational and social reformer, both in Europe and in India, she, save Charles Bradlaugh, had not yet met her match.

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Gandhi too was no match for her although he came up under the shadow of the benign British system and by means of the national patronage extended to him by his own countrymen, both in South Africa and India, because those Indians required a leader of their own breed, their own creed, own colour, ~~and~~ tongue, own garbs and so on. A Gandhi could flourish only under such circumstances and liberal governments of the British type, because he was found ill-suited to India as soon as the British left, but an Annie Besant, a woman with definite mission, outstanding intelligence and extraordinary gift of the gab, could flourish anywhere to achieve her pre-ordained mission and under any system of governments or in any pattern of society.

In India, however, Annie Besant, it should be repeated, had not met her match. Everyone of the politicians of her time, beginning from Tilak to Gandhi, were afraid of her. She was no lawyer but lawyers in the court were no match for her when she took to argue and plead in cases that she launched up to the Supreme courts or the Privy Council in London. Those timid folks like Motilal Nehru, her son and several professional politicians had no place before her mighty presence. Those 'cunning' and calculating schemers and fence-sitters of South India, like Vijayaraghavachari and Rajagopalachari managed to come to light only after they saw Gandhi far away in Gujarat coming down to South speaking his own language.

On the whole, most of the clever educated fellows amongst Indians envied a strange woman like this, delivering torrential lectures on religion of the Hindus, translating and selling millions of copies of her Bhagavad Gita, opening national schools and Panchama schools and as usual taking the world tour almost once a year or once in two years. All those Indian politicians who were watching her from the sidelines later confessed ~~her~~ that they were too late to realise the relevancy of Mrs. Besant, her Home Rule agitations, her scheme for Dominion Status and her Commonwealth of India Bill.

In ~~From~~ Gandhi the poor India had only a conceited bungler in politics who was not sure of what he was doing and to where he was leading the country. He not only split the Indian National Congress to play his own politics and to 'experiment' his ~~fancy~~ obsolete schemes like Satyagraha, Hartal and fasting just to feed his vanity, he also caused to split the once proud and united India by his superficial and ineffective ways of tackling the national problems.

In contrast to such deplorable facts, Annie Besant fought fervently against many evil forces and came up. She awakened the slumbering nation and toiled to unite all disuniting elements of the country. The Muslims could never use her for their politics, and still they respected her integrity wheres as Gandhi was used by Muslims easily for extraneous causes and then left him. Mrs. Besant had almost brought ~~in~~ Hindu-Muslim unity through Lucknow Pact and other programmes whereas Gandhi's Unity drive was ~~only~~ seen or heard only in street songs during his various Hartal processions. By that kind of street politics Gandhi lost the support of both the Hindu and Muslim intelligentia of the country and all that led the country to a very unhappy freedom, which no one relished, except a few of his own cronies who were his followers.

Gandhi, of course, dabbled in several social and educational programmes like basic education, woman's rights, cottage industry and untouchability- all these initiated by Mrs. Besant through her Theosophical Society, but Gandhi got the better publicity benefit because he was 22 years her junior in age, and she had almost retired from those activities by I920. But Gandhi's fancy schemes were mostly on newspapers like his protege Vinoba Bhave's BHOO-DAAN or cow-protection projects of these days. Without any resources these men publicised such things, probably to remind the people that they were still living and not yet dead.

But, in that the story of Mrs. Besant was entirely different. The fact about her was that she did nothing if she had no resources coming from somewhere. She spent many millions of rupees for her National schools and colleges, for projects concerning the social and cultural revival, women's education, Panchama or Harijan school, dance school and so on. She would collect enormous funds from abroad during her ~~trix~~ world-wide trips and spent them ~~on~~ for feeding the poor, educating the brighter youths, nursing the sick children etc etc. Her National colleges and schools were the living monuments of her outstanding work in this country. Indeed, Mother Besant was truly the mother of the country in her days, but the forgetfulness of ~~the~~ an ungrateful country to revive her name and work she did for the benefit of the country is too difficult for the enlighted section of the people to forget. However, how many more such forgotten and yet unforgettable characters might be in the wombs of history- God alone knows!

This is the Besant diary of principal events of her life:

I847: October Ist- born in London, 5-39 p.m.
I855: Education under Miss Marryat till I864,
I86I: First travel outside England- to Europe.
I866: Met Rev. Frank Besant, whom she married in December I867,
I867: Met the lawyer Mr. Roberts, her first tutor in Radicalism; her first experience ~~xxxxx~~ of an angry crowd whom she pacified,
I868: First writing in 'The Family Herald'- got 30 shillings for a stroy,
I87I: Attempts suicide- heard her Master's voice, met Thomas Scott, a helpful friend.
I873: Discovered the gift of oratory; end of marriage, left home and husband, left son Digby with his father and took daughter Mable with her; left Christianity.
I874: Met Charles Bradlaugh, joined the National Secular Society, an article in the 'National Reformer' under the name AJAX; first public lecture on the political status of Women; second lecture- the True Basis of Morality; took part in elecioneering to Charles Bradlaugh;
I875: Became an Atheist (I874-I886); became a free-thinker and social reformer; lectures on French Revolution from the standpoint of the oppressed people;
I877: Arrested for selling the Knowlron pamphlet; appeared in law court as her own advocate; the trial led to the founding of the Malthusian League;
I878: Sub-editor of the 'National Reformer (I877-79); deprived the custody of eight-year old daughter after herself pleading her case;
I879: Met Dr. Edward Aveling- teacher in science, matriculated in London University; qualified as science teacher in eight different sciences; helped to conduct a science school; the cause of Afghanistan upheld;
I880: Represented the Freethinkers at International Conference at Brussels; fought for the rights of the Atheists with Charles Bradlaugh;
I88I: Championed the cause of Transval and in I892, the causes of Egypt and Ireland.
I885: Joined the Fabian Society; helped to form a society of Friends of Russia; and championed the cause of Soudan;
I887: Met W.T.Stead, open-air meetings; the riots of Traffalgar Square, member of the London School Board for three years;

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I888: Met Herbart Burrows; organised match-makers' Union; studied inner science of consciousness and spiritualism;
I889: Read and reviewed the Secret Doctrine; met Mme. Blavatsky; joined the Theosophical Society; wrote on 'How I Became a Theosophist?' Met Col. Henry Olcott;
I89I: Founded the Working Women's Club at Bow with Mme. Blavatsky; left on her first lecture tour in United States; succeeded Mme. Blavatsky;
I893: Represented the Theosophical Society at the World Parliament of Religions at Chicago, arrived in Colombo in November, lectured on KARMA, on the I6th landed in India at Tuticorin; first convention lectures- 'The Building of the Kosmos':
I894: First lecture tour in India attracting thousands of people; engaged in the case of W.Judge, first lecture tour in Australia & New Zealand, first address to the Indian National Congress;
I895: Settled in Benares; translated Bhagvad Gita; awarded the SubbaRaw medal;
I898: Started Central Hindu College in Benares- the 7th July;
I900: Lectures in India on Social Reform, started Hindu College Magazine in I90I.
I902: The magazine reached I5,000 circulatinn; joined the Free-masonry;
I904: Started a Girls' School in Benares, paid a visit to Pope in Rome;
I906: Engaged in the case of Bishop Leadbeater;
I907: elected President of Theosophical Society- the 6th July;
I908: Founded the T.S,Order of Service; started the Vasanta Press at Adyar; formed the associations of 'Sons & Daughters of India', etc.
I909: Adopted J.Krishnamurthy and his brother Nityanand; travelled 45,000 miles- united States, Canada, Europe, etc.
I9II: From I907, the area of the Adyar Estate was extended from 27 to 253 acres; lectures in France (in French), started the Order of the Star in the East;
I9I3: From I9I2- engaged in law suit with J.Naranaiah; started the T.S.Publishing House; entered the Indian politics claiming Dominion Status within the Commonwealth; Central Hindu College was handed over to become B.H.U., T.S.Education Trust founded;
I9I4: The Weekly COOMONWEAL- founded, re-elected President of T.S.; Started the national daily, The NEW INDIA from July I4th; founded Y.M.I.A., and donated Gokhale Hall in Madras to be a centre of free speech.
I9I6: Started the Home Rule League; externed from Bombay presidency; started Girls' College in Benares; took part in the 'Lucknow Pact';
I9I7: Founded the Order of the Brothers of Service & the Indian Women's Asson:. interned by the Government of Madras, President of the Congress, started the National University under the Chancellorship of Nobel Laurette Tagore;
I9I8: Organized the Indian Boy Scouts' Association;
I920: Stood against Gandhi at the Nagpur Congress on non-cooperation; she stood alone with five others while thousands kept shouting;
I92I: Hon.Commissioner for Indian Scout Asson:, re-elceted President of T.S.; President of Theosophical World Congress at Paris, lectured in French at Sarbonne, Doctor of Laws by Benares Hindu 'Varsity; started political Club in Madras;
I924: The Queen's Hall lectures in London; the Golden Jubilee celebration of her public activities in London, Madras & Bombay; attended the Belgaum Congress;
I925: Took her Commonwealth of India Bill to London; attended a great Star camp in Holland; Golden Jubilee of the T.S.; when 3000 delegates from all over the world came to Adyar; established the Temples of the Religions in Adyar;
I926: Started the Theosophical Colony at Juhu, Bombay; left for foreign tour;
I927: Started the Happy Valley in California; delivered over 50 lectures in twelve countries; 80 years young this year, visited Europe, U.S. & Canada, travel by plane;
I928: Re-elected President of T.S.; on invitation wrote a note for the World Peace Union; got ill in London, cancelled Queen's Hall lectures;
I929: Inaugurated the 4th T.S.World Congress at Chicago; a letter to President Hoover of U.S. to abolish war; in London and back into Indian politics;
I930: Golden Jubilee of Blavatsky Lodge in Bombay; last visit to Benares, London and Europe, presided over the T.S.European Congress at Geneva;
I93I: The Blavatsky Centenary at Adyar; delivered last speech on the 24th December;
I932: The Olcott Centenary at Adyar; awarded 'Silver Wolf'- the highest Scout honour;
I933: Expired at Adyar at 4 p.m. of the 20th September!

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Mrs. Annie Besant was also a prolific writer on varieties of subjects. She edited and published several bulletins, Weeklies as well as bi-Weeklies, and also newspapers. She wrote on religion, culture, theosophy, metaphysics, occultism, politics etc and it was a long continuous flow of immense literary output for well over sixty years. Here is a list of her various books and pamphlets, or a rough estimate of her voluminous writings but one cannot be sure that this list is complete:

I05- books and pamphlets were written by Mrs. Annie Besant before she became a Theosophist, from I873 to I890; those writings are about Christianity, Atheism, Science politics, history, socialism, radicalism, etc.

6- books and smaller editions were produced between I877 and I9I3, and they are biographical and autobiographical accounts; an account of her own life, on Charles Bradlaugh, Col. Henry Steel Olcott, Giordano Bruno- the apostle of Theosophy,----.

215- publications of Mrs. Besant's lectures, and some more smaller editions on Theosophy, Hinduism, Karma, Yoga, Reincarnation, Mysticism, ancient Wisdom, etc, also include her talks and discourses on various subjects.

30- books, booklets and articles are listed exclusively under the head- Religion, and those include Mrs. Besant's talks and writings on Christianity, the Islam, Hinduism, etc. She also delivered lectures on Buddhism, Upanishads, Hindu ethics, Reincarnation, Universalism, etc etc.

20 pieces of her compilations are entirely on the Queen's Hall lectures that she delivered from I905 to I928, on subjects like 'Changing World', 'India & the Empire', United States of Europe, New Civilization, War & its Lessons, Women and Politics, etc.

45 publications of booklets, articles and some books are listed and those deal exclusively with Indian culture, Education and Social reforms. The subjects include Hitopadesha, National Education, Indian Epics, the Epic heroes, protection of Children, 'Wake up, India', Theosophy in India, Future of India, etc etc.

75 or more pieces of Mrs. Besant's writings in the form of articles and pamphlets, and also some books, deal with only Indian politics; on Home Rule, self-Government, the New Era, the Nation Building; Criticism of non-Cooperation movement, 'How India Wrought for Freedom?', India and the Empire, etc etc.

Apart from these, Mrs. Annie Besant's writings are scattered in various newspapers, magazines and several other publications. She has edited several news magazines and bulletins, beginning from 'National Reformer' in London to India's national daily, known as NEW INDIA. Her contributions to the journals of Ethical Societies, Theosophical publications, Atheistic, political and other humanitarian publications were also numerous. All her thousands of lectures that she delivered in India, Europe, United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, France and elsewhere have not been fully recorded or compiled. The total out put of all these would be tremendously large, and Annie Besant Literature, if fully compiled and published, would be the world's outstanding series of volumes on such subjects as Religion, Socialism, Politics, Theosophy, history of Indian Nationalism, and so on.

Mohandas Gandhi, as already said, was literally inspired by the activities of Mrs. Annie Besant in England in the late I880s, while he was a student there. Later he scrupulously followed her career while in South Africa and was deeply impressed. Gandhi was a fighter of a different mould, and as a writer, he was not anywhere near Mrs. Besant. owever, here is the Gandhi diary that show the main events of his life:

I869: Born on the 2nd October at Porbandar, Kathiawad, Gujarat,
I876: In Rajkot with parents, where he attended primary school,
I88I: Entered High School in Rajkot,
I883: Got married with Kasturbai,
I887: Passed matriculation and joined Samaldas College, Bhavanagar, but gave up,

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I888: In September, left for England to study law;
I89I: Read 'The Secret Doctrine' and other religious books, attended the funeral of Charles Bradlaugh, Visited Mme. Blavatsky and Annie Besant, called to Bar, returned to India.
I893: Left for South Africa;
I894: Enrolled as an advocate of the supreme court of Natal, read Bible, Quraan and Tolstoys works, founded the Natal Indian Congress;
I896: Back in India and worked for the cause of South African Indians; met Tilak and Gokhale for the first time, and returned to South Africa with his family;
I897: Was mobbed by the crowd in Durban on landing; result of his speeches in India;
I899: Raised Indians' Ambulance Corps in the Boer War; was awarded a Gold Medal and mentioned in Government dispatches;
I90I: Spent a year in India; stayed with Gokhale in Calcutta and attended Congress sessions; met Mrs. Besant on his way back at Benares;
I902: Called to South Africa to campion the cause of Indians against anti-Asiatic legislation in Transval;
I904: Founded a Gujarati journal- 'Indian Opinion'; opened the Phoenix Farm near Durban, read Ruskin's works, wrote several articles;
I906: Raised Indian Stretcher-bearer Corps during Zulu Rebellion; took vow of Brahmacharya for life; passive resistance against Transval Asiatic law; to England on deputation to present the case of Indians to the Colonial Secretary;
I907: Organised the passive resistance movement; gave up legal practice;
I908: Two months jail term for failure to leave Transval; summoned to see Gen. Smuts; protested against taking finger-prints; refused to prosecute his assailants, jailed again for two months for leading the passive resistance movement;
I909: Left for England on deputation; met Savarkar in London; wrote HIND SWARAJ;
I9I0: Founded Tolstoy Farm in Johannesburg;
I9I2: Penitential fast for a week; gave up European dress and restricted himself to a diet of dried fruits; wrote 'Ethical Religion';
I9I3: Satyagraha movement; arrested and released, and re-arrested;
I9I4: Arrived at an agreement with Gen. Smuts; left for England; raised an Ambulance Corps in London during the war;
I9I5: In India; awarded Kaiser-i-Hind medal; founded Sabarmati ASHRAM; began travelling in India and Burma;
I9I7: The cult of spinning wheel; the Champaran agitation;
I9I8: the cause of Textile labourers of Ahmedabad; the Kaira Satyagraha; recruited men for the Army in support of the British war effort;
I9I9: Country-wide Hartal against Rowlett Act; arrested; Jalianwalla Bagh tragedy, took to penitential fast; editorship of NAV-JIVAN- a Gujarati monthly; edited YOUNG INDIA; presided over the Khilafat conference; accepted the Montague Reforms;
I920: went on deputation to the Viceroy on Khilafat issue; surrendered all his medals; non-cooperation programme accepted by the Congress; motion on SWARAJ passed;
I92I: Boycotting and burning of foreign cloth; full dictatorial powers to lead Congress; arranged to boycott the visit of the Prince of Wales;
I922: Bardoli Satyagraha; the tragedy of Chauri-Chaura; five-day fast; arrested for sedition and sentenced for six years in jail;
I924: Released from jail; operation for appendicities; a 2I-day fast for Hindu-Muslim unity; presided over Belgaum Congress; resumed editorship of Nav-Jivan & Young India.
I925: founded all India Spinners' Asson: Wrote 'Experiments with Truth';
I928: moved a resolution at the Congress sessions that if Dominion Status was not granted by I929, complete independence would be the goal of Congress;
I930: Civil-disobedience movement; plan to break the Salt Law, the Dandi march and later his arrest and also of some thousands all over the country;
I93I: Unconditionally released; the Gandhi-Irwin pact; to England for the Round Table Conference, had tea with king George V; met Romain Rolland and Mussolini;
I932: Arrested in January; started fast unto death in jail and secured abolition of separate electorates for Harijans in Communal Award;
I933: the Weekly HARIJAN started in English and Hindi; a self-purification fast, disband- the Satyagraha Ashram; undertook tour for the cause of Harijans;

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I934: Announced on the retirement from politics and then took to social work like Harijan uplift, spinning, basic education, etc.
I936: Sevagram, a village near Wardha, became his headquarters;
I939: A fast at Rajkot to secure promise of good administration by the ruler of the State; the Viceroy intervened; a letter to Hitler appealing to stop war;
I94I: the country-wide Individual Satyagraha; Vinoba Bhave came to limelight;
I942: Met Sir Strafford Cripps; the Quit India movement; arrest of all Congressmen;
I944: a 2I-day fast; death of Kasturba in I943, Gandhi-Jinnah talks began; Rs. IIO-lakh purse collected for Kasturba Memorial fund;
I945: The Simla Conference; the Cabinet mission in India;
I946: Constituent Assembly formed; tours the Bengal villages;
I947: the Naokhali peace mission; addressed the Asian Relations Conference; left for Bihar; talks with Jinnah and Lord Mountbatten; partition of the country announced; the creation of Pakistan; freedom of India; the Kashmir war began;
I948: the month of January; the last fast unto death but broken after five days; the communal violence in North India; saw that Rs. 55 crores- paid to Pakistan as per the agreement; first attempt at assassination; shot at 5.I2 p.m. on the 30th January while walking to the prayer grounds in Birla House, New Delhi.

Gandhi was no author of any significant publications except his small treatise on Bhagavad Gita and his autobiography, which in itself is not complete, either. All the rest of his writings, the entire bulk, are in the form of numerous articles, letters and correspondence with the Governments of South Africa, Great Britain and India, and with various organizations and people of many countries. Most of those letters are on economic, social and political affairs. Gandhi has written a good many pamphlets and booklets, also!

Gandhi's newspaper articles in Gujarati, Hindi and English are numerous. He has spoken and written on subjects like Education, Science, Hygiene, Humanities, Industry, Spinning, Untouchability, etc etc. There are good many articles on religion, too. His main journals are 'Indian Opinion', 'Hind Swaraj', 'Young India', Nav-Jivan, Harijan and one or two short-lived bulletins. He has also contributed articles to various other journals and newspapers; and the newspapers in India, South Africa and England have carried reports on a wide range of his activities and speeches.

Gandhi was no orator; he spoke softly and put things lucidly and concisely, and and yet he was one of the politicians who delivered many lectures all over the country. The gist of the most of his speeches and writings, is given in the collected works about him, published by the Government of India at an enormous cost and in over one-hundred volumes. Gandhi's main subject of talk was politics and about social ethics. He had nothing much to say on religion, science, philosophy or humanities, and whenever he spoke on all these subjects, he would do so in the simplest language possible.

Gandhi travelled little. Except Europe and South Africa, Gandhi did not visit any other country. In one of his India tours, he went to Burma. He has travelled twice to England straight from India, in I888 and I93I, and from South Africa he went to London about three or four times. Except that most of his travels were within South Africa from I893 to I9I4 and in India from I9I5 to I948.

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